



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>

RESEARCH LIBRARIES



07606659 0

SKINS

MUEL G. BLYTHE

1. History, American





HUNKINS

Hunks

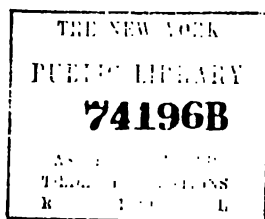
BY

SAMUEL G. BLYTHE

AUTHOR OF "A WESTERN WARWICK,"
"THE FAKERS," ETC.

NEW YORK

GEORGE H. DORAN COMPANY



**COPYRIGHT, 1919,
BY GEORGE H. DORAN COMPANY**

COPYRIGHT, 1919, BY THE CURTIS PUBLISHING COMPANY

PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

CE

TO MY SON
STUART O. BLYTHE



CONTENTS

| CHAPTER | | PAGE |
|---------|-----------------------------------|------|
| I | DAD POOH-POOHS | 11 |
| II | MY FRIENDS SCOFF | 20 |
| III | THE DIRECTORS DEPRECATE | 32 |
| IV | STEVE FOX APPROVES | 44 |
| V | I HEAR OF DOWD | 56 |
| VI | DOWD SETS ME STRAIGHT | 64 |
| VII | I MEET HUNKINS | 73 |
| VIII | ME—AN ALDERMAN! | 84 |
| IX | STEVE FOX PRINTS IT | 93 |
| X | I MEET MISS CRAWFORD | 104 |
| XI | I HEAR SOME THINGS | 118 |
| XII | I ACCEPT THE NOMINATION | 127 |
| XIII | THE BEEFSTEAK PARTY | 137 |
| XIV | RUDOLPH PLAYS POKER | 150 |
| XV | A CALL TO ARMS | 157 |
| XVI | THE PLAN OF CAMPAIGN | 175 |
| XVII | WE GIVE BATTLE | 183 |
| XVIII | THE STRATEGY OF HUNKINS | 196 |
| XIX | PERKINS NEEDS \$40,000 | 209 |
| XX | A DISCOURSE ON WOMEN | 218 |
| XXI | HUNKINS PICKS PERKINS | 229 |
| XXII | I PICK MYSELF | 242 |
| XXIII | TALBOT FOR MAYOR | 249 |
| XXIV | WE GET UNDER WAY | 259 |

| CHAPTER | | PAGE |
|---------|-----------------------------------|------|
| XXV | MR. PERKINS ENTERS | 269 |
| XXVI | THERE IS GREAT TURMOIL | 277 |
| XXVII | HUNKINS TALKS | 286 |
| XXVIII | PREPARING FOR TROUBLE | 296 |
| XXIX | DOWD IS DELAYED | 304 |
| XXX | THE FIGHT IN RATTIGAN'S | 314 |
| XXXI | I SEEK INFORMATION | 327 |
| XXXII | THE ACCUSING MINUTES | 338 |
| XXXIII | HUNKINS TALKS AGAIN | 347 |
| XXXIV | TWO WINNERS | 360 |

HUNKINS



Hunkins

CHAPTER I

DAD POOH-POOHS

D'AD," I said, "I am going into politics."
Dad sat up in his chair with a jerk, and bored into me with those eyes of his. Dad's eyes are devastating. He turns them on you, and you can feel them searing through you and searching your soul.

"With what?" The two words exploded like fire-crackers.

That was Dad. I had a half hope that I might lead him into a discussion over my plan, but I saw immediately that he was not rising to any feeble lure of mine that morning. He wasn't in a mood to tolerate debate, and insisted on knowing, at once, the object of the meeting. I was barely inside the door before he impaled me on the main point.

"With what?"

I wasn't prepared to answer. In fine, I didn't know the answer. The only commodity I have for going into politics is a high resolve. I feel the urge of it, and have ever since I left the Army. I know that many things are wrong, and I have a sort of a convic-

tion that I may take steps to right some of the wrong things. No details are ready. I have no plan beyond the vague one that as our local politics is rotten the obvious thing to do to purify those politics. All I can offer is the germ of an idea, and germs of ideas get nowhere with Dad. He wants—demands—complete specifications.

I had to say something. Nothing annoys Dad like hesitation. If you ask him a question he has it answered before you are finished. If he asks you a question he expects the same acceleration. I inventoried my mind hurriedly. There was nothing suitable in stock. So I struck a sort of an attitude, made myself look as a potential young crusader ought to look, as I envisaged one, and hit the highest spot I could by declaiming, earnestly: "With all my heart!"

"Equipment's not sufficient," said Dad. He turned back to his desk.

"But, Dad," I protested, "give me a chance to talk it over with you before you decide against me. I—I——"

Dad swung around in his chair and pulled his right eyebrow. That is a bad sign. Whenever Dad pulls his right eyebrow the rapids are just below the person he pulls them at.

"All right. Let's discuss this fool proposal. Now, start all over again. What did you say?"

"I said I am going into politics."

"Not with my money."

Dad pulled at that eyebrow so furiously I thought he would tear it out by the roots. I hoped he wouldn't. Dad would look odd with only one big, shaggy eye-



brow. It would spoil the effect of his rugged face, and leave him at a frightful loss whenever he desires, and intends, to jump on the quivering form of one of his business adversaries or associates. That was only a fleeting impression, and I dismissed it. Other and more important matters pressed on me. It was essential to continue that conversation. I must show Dad that he cannot floor me in the first round. Indignation was my cue.

"I haven't asked you for any money," I said, attempting to voice a clear and ringing protest.

"No, but you will. So it's just as well to get that part of it settled in advance. Go ahead."

The difficulties piled upon me. I came hoping to interest Dad in an unselfish, patriotic, municipal reform, and Dad put it all on a crass financial basis before I had finished the preliminary announcement. It was disheartening. But Dad always does lack imagination, except in business. He is a pioneer, some say a buccaneer, in that, but in other affairs he is conventional as a china egg. Nothing exists for him but business. He lives it, sleeps it and eats it. You lay a proposition before Dad and he has it separated into dollars and cents before you have estimated the preliminary cost. He is a wizard that way. And cold as a wedge.

"Go ahead," said Dad, again, still pulling at that eyebrow.

"Well, it's this way: You know how rotten this city administration is, and has been for a good many years. I've heard about it since I was a boy. You know that there have been a good many attempts to clean it up, and that these attempts have failed, or

only partially succeeded, because there was little or no organization behind them, and that the reformers usually got tired after a year or two and the old gang slid back into power. You know that there are enough votes available to wipe out that City Hall crowd. All that is needed is intelligent organization and application. The raw material is here. It is only necessary to manufacture that raw material into a cohesive political body to do the trick."

I rather fancied that "raw material" touch. That's Dad's business, making raw material into things.

"Quite right," said Dad, giving no sign that he had observed my figurative speech. "Excellently stated. All it needs is intelligent organization, and, if I understand you correctly, you claim to have that organizing intelligence."

"Now, Dad," I protested.

"Wait a minute. You come in here with the announcement that you are going into politics. Then you state the political case as it exists here. You say that conditions may be bettered by organization. Hence, I must deduce that you intend to do the organizing. Let's get to the bottom of this. Where did you get this idea?"

"In France."

"Pish!" said Dad. "Merely because you were promoted from second lieutenant to captain you mustn't think you can come back here and reform a condition that has existed for thirty years. Those two bars on your shoulders don't make a political leader out of you. Deflate yourself, and after you have had a rest get back into the business."

That really made me angry. Dad was still pulling at his eyebrow, but I walked over to his desk and pounded on it a little. Not too violently. I knew better than that. Just a few bangs with my fist to show earnestness. Then I cut loose.

"It isn't that at all. I am not setting myself up as a political leader, but I know a few things, just the same. I was in the Army for a year and a half and for eight months of that time I was in France. My regiment was in the front line for five months, and we saw a lot of fighting. I don't have to tell you whether we had a good regiment or a poor one. You know our record."

"What's that got to do with the situation here?"

"Everything. The reason we were a good regiment was because we were a close, cohesive organization, every man in every company working under skillful direction to the same end—to kill Germans. Our fellows were not soldiers in the professional sense. They were volunteers and national guard men except for a few of the officers. But they made good because the men who handled them knew how to organize them."

"Come to the point," ordered Dad.

"I am coming to it. The point is that I learned that the way to get big things done is to do them as a mass play, not piddle around individually. Other men of my sort learned the same thing."

"The war is over." Dad was irritating.

"I know the war is over, but what we learned in the Army, both here and in France, isn't forgotten, and won't be. Dad, don't you realize the opportunity

"Who asked you for money?" I shouted. "Besides, it isn't a question of money. It's a question of the highest community interest, of moral regeneration, of better civic government, of the preservation and application of the ideals for which we fought, of the uplifting of our home conditions, of—of——" I floundered a bit.

"Dough," Dad concluded for me.

I picked up my hat. Dad sat looking at me with one of his quizzical smiles. "Anyhow," I thought, "I've put on a good show for him," and the smile encouraged me a little. There was a ray of hope.

"Think it over, won't you?" I asked, stopping at the door.

"Don't have to. It's a fool proposition. After you have jammed yourself up against Bill Hunkins, and Pete Crowley, and Tony Milano, and Tom Pendergrast and a few more of the sweet-scented gang who run this city you will find that whipping the Germans wasn't a marker to regenerating the politics here and applying to our local government the ideals which were inculcated in you in France. But, when you are at this high endeavor, don't fail to remember that this institution does not finance any ideals whatsoever. We deal in actualities in this establishment."

I heard Dad laughing as I went down the hall. Then I heard his buzzer, and before the elevator came up a boy ran to me and said: "Mr. Talbot would like you to come back to his office a moment."

"He's relented," I thought. "Good old Dad! Pretty cold outside, but he has a warm heart in him."

He was standing by a window looking out over the

city, and turned as I entered. "George," he said, "I'm not going to try to stop you if you are determined to get yourself into this mess, and I am not going to help you, either. However, as a business man, there is one word of advice I would like to give you before you begin."

"Thank you, Dad."

"You say you have in mind an organization of the soldiers and sailors for two purposes. The first is to help clean up our politics. Am I right?"

"Yes, sir."

"The second, as I gather it, is to help the soldiers themselves. Do I quote you correctly?"

"Yes, sir."

"Well, son, my advice is this: Cut the idealistic part of your programme to the minimum, and play up the helping the soldiers themselves end of it. Then you may get somewhere. Good morning."

CHAPTER II

MY FRIENDS SCOFF

I WAS angry after I got into the hall after Dad's second dismissal of me, angry at Dad, angry at myself for having exposed my plan to him before I had it worked out; but especially angry at Dad. He has no sympathy. He is too practical. I stood uncertain where to go or what to do when the familiar lettering on his office door pulled me back approximately to normal: "The Talbot Pump and Engine Company. John J. Talbot, President."

"Pshaw!" I thought. "Dad is Dad. An idealistic suggestion doesn't appeal to him, naturally. How could it? He owns one of the biggest pump and engine works in this country, and there's nothing idealistic about an engine, or a pump. Those are the most utilitarian appliances on this earth."

Thus appeased I went down the elevator and out of doors. Dad's offices are in the Talbot Building on Main Street. The works are out on the edge of the city. He has two thousand men on his pay-roll, and manufactures every sort of a pump needed for mining, engineering projects, irrigation and other similar purposes; and various kinds of engines, but, principally hoisting engines. He turned the shops over for war work, made an enormous number of big shells, and is

busy getting the works back to a peace production basis. That excused his impatient attitude towards me, too, and I was quite cheerful after I had walked a block. I am proud of Dad, really. He has done a lot of things in his practical, non-idealistic way.

Take the Talbot Pump and Engine Company, for example. Dad began as a machinist, and now he is one of the richest men in the city, and one of the largest employers of labor. He installs pumps and engines all over the world. Almost any mine you may mention has his machinery in it. The only amusement he gets out of life is in building greater and better pumps than any other pump-maker. He'll build a pump some day big enough to empty Lake Huron. But no imagination! Positively not! So practical he makes your head ache. His assertion that it would be wise to put my political enterprise on the basis of self-interest proved that.

I met Fred Daskin and Jimmie Chambers at the corner of Third Street. Fred was captain of B company in my regiment, and Jimmie is a flyer. He has two or three decorations—an Ace.

"Where are you going?" Fred asked me.

"Nowhere."

"Well, come along to lunch with Jimmie and me. We're going to Short's to get a steak just to impress on ourselves our joy over our freedom from Army chow—a real Sam Lazarus steak, you know, with marrow bones and corn fritters and pickled walnuts and all the other fancy upholstery. A bit heavy for the middle of the day, but we hanker for it, after eighteen months of Army beef. Are you game?"

"Sure," I said, and I joined them. Fred and Peter, who has been waiter at Short's for twenty years, had a long consultation over the steak and inspected all the cuts in the icebox before deciding on which one to broil. Then Peter personally superintended the broiling of it at the great range at the end of the room. Peter split the other steak, in which the Sam Lazarus is broiled, placed one thin piece on top and one on the bottom, stood around until those outer steaks were burned off and their juices had penetrated our inner delectable, fried the fritters and the rest of the things that Mr. Lazarus, in his great steak wisdom, decreed should come with it and finally served it tender, luscious—real steak.

The talk was mostly about Army experiences while we were eating. I proposed, after we had eliminated the steak, that we should close the proceedings with apple pie.

"'Ray!" exclaimed Jimmie. "Then we'll never have to eat again. Bring on the pie."

Short's pie-maker is an artist. He constructs regular apple pies, with the top crust a golden brown, the bottom flaky and not raw dough, and plenty of apples, butter, sugar, nutmeg, cinnamon in them; and the juice runs out around the edges and is all brown and shiny and sweet. Those pies are poems, lyrics, not the vers-libre things that come from the ordinary pie-foundry, anemic, pale gray, and clammy. Peter recommended seconds on the pie, but we couldn't. We compromised on coffee. Peter likes to see his friends eat.

"Now," said Jimmie, "we should have some intellectual diversion. Any suggestions?"

I had been thinking about Fred and Jimmie during the meal. They both have leisure, and money. They might fall in with my plan, and I'd never have a more propitious opportunity for sounding them.

"Let's sit here for a while," I urged. "I want to talk to you about something."

"But, my dear George, Jimmie specified intellectual diversion," observed Fred.

"I may not divert your intellects, but I hope to jar them, provided there is anything to jar," I retorted.

These amenities concluded we lighted fresh cigarettes, and I asked: "Do you chaps know anything about politics?"

"Rotten game," said Jimmie.

"All of that," endorsed Fred.

"Certainly, and that's just what I have in mind. Politics is rotten, but it needn't be."

"Needn't be?" asked Jimmie, astonished. "How are you going to stop it? Why, I know Bill Hunkins and Tom Pendergrast, and they run the politics of this town. Don't try to tell me that anything those babies have to do with isn't putrid, or needn't be. It's just got to be; that's all."

"Correct," said Fred.

"But," I protested, "simply because Bill Hunkins and Tom Pendergrast make politics rotten doesn't prove that politics necessarily must be that way. If Tom Smith and Sam Jones were running the politics of this town, and Tom Smith and Sam Jones were honest, decent men, don't you think that their politics would be honest and decent, too?"

"Not on your life," answered Jimmie. "It isn't the

men that make politics what it is; it's politics that makes the men what they are. Works the other way around. Before Bill Hunkins and Tom Pendergrast got control here Andrew Bruce and Charley Thompson ran things, and they were just the same. You can pick out any Tom Smith and Sam Jones you want to, and put them into politics and in a few years, no matter how honest and decent they were when they started, they will be pulling things that Tom Pendergrast never thought about. It's a rotten game, I tell you."

"But it needn't be," I asserted again. "If we——"

"Oh, Lord," interrupted Fred. "We're not interested in politics. Let's go out and have a round of golf."

"That's just it," I said. "You are not interested. Jimmie is not interested. Nobody is interested but Hunkins and Pendergrast and the rest of that gang, and they go on getting away with all this stuff year after year. The preachers preach about it, and the editors write about it, and the long hairs hold meetings to protest against it; but folks like us, who ought to be interested are not interested, and year after year they set up a Board of Aldermen on us that steals us blind, and elect a mayor who does exactly what Hunkins tells him to, or Pendergrast, depending on whose turn it is to have the mayor; and we sit around and say it's all rotten, and let it go with that feeble denunciation."

Fred and Jimmie were astonished at this outburst. It was the first time they had heard me talk that way, except for some casual grouching in the trenches when supplies were not coming up very well, or some other

military mishap had occurred. It was about the first time I ever heard myself talk that way.

"What's biting you, George?" Jimmie asked.

"I'll tell you what's biting me, it won't take me two minutes. I don't know what you fellows got out of this war, and your service in it, but what I got out of it is this: I saw four million men taken from civil life and made over into the best soldiers there ever were in this world, and all in a year and a half. I commanded some of those soldiers, and so did you, Fred. I know the stuff that is in them, and I know that the lessons they learned in the way of organization and discipline need not be wasted after they get back at their pre-war jobs provided they have the same sort of suggestive direction they had when they were being made into soldiers. In round numbers there are ten thousand of those soldiers right here in this city or will be when they all get home, and they are nearly all voters. Put on top of that the ten thousand women voters they can influence, or who come within their influence and right there you have a political body that can chase Bill Hunkins and Tom Pendergrast so far out in the high grass they never will get back."

"What's the idea?" asked Fred. "Where do we come in? Who's going to organize the soldiers?"

"I am," I replied, with such dramatic effect as I could command.

Fred looked across at Jimmie and tapped his forehead. Jimmie nodded understandingly, and began whistling the chorus of Madelon. Neither said anything.

I felt that I had made no impression, and I raised

my voice. Ever notice how you shout when you want to make another person understand—trying to get a Frenchman to comprehend your French, for example?

"Say something," I demanded. "Don't sit there like a couple of duds."

Jimmie concluded the chorus of Madelon with an elaborate flourish. Fred took a cigarette from his case, lighted it, and tried to make a smoke ring. I could feel my temperature rising.

Finally, Jimmie asked, solicitously: "Haven't caught the 'flu' or anything like that, have you?"

"No," I replied, and I was vicious about it.

"Poor boy," said Fred. "He has delusions of grandeur."

Peter, the waiter, was near by. I beckoned to him. "Peter," I said, "I am about to give vent to some loud language. I feel it coming over me. Don't be fussy and send for the police or anything. I shan't assault them—here."

"All right, Mr. George, so long as you don't break any of the dishes." And Peter moved discreetly away.

"Now, look here and listen to me, you, Fred Daskin, and you, Jimmie Chambers, while I tell you a few things about yourselves: I've known you all your lives. We grew up together, lived on the same street, went to the same college, and have been in all sorts of places and scrapes together. We went into the Army at the beginning of the war, and we have all three of us been in France, and in the thick of it. That's where we stand now.

"You, Fred Daskin, except for the work you did in the Army, have never done anything in your life ex-

cept have a good time. You don't have to, for your father is rich, and softer-hearted than mine. You, Jimmie Chambers, are playing at being a lawyer, and you are not at your office twice a month, but spend all your time at golf and polo, and fooling around with a lot of canary-witted girls. And I'm not much better."

"Oh, la la la," said Fred. "Don't be so modest."

"I'm not much better. It happens that my father is harder-bitten than either of yours, and he grabbed me when I got through college and stuck me in the business. He tried to make me work. I kept office hours, but didn't work much. I was busy doing what you boys were doing and what you seem to be preparing to do again—nothing that amounts to a tinker's dam."

"We went into the Army, didn't we?" asked Fred.

"We did. We went into the Army, and that is what I am coming to. We each of us have three service stripes. Those mean eighteen months in the service. What I want to know is this: Are those three service stripes, and the little rank we got, the only things the Army did for us?"

"Brushed up my French," put in Jimmie.

"Mine, too," said Fred.

"Is that all? Well, the Army did more for me than that—a heap more."

"Made a politician of you, for instance?" Jimmie was laughing at me.

"It gave me a sort of a slant on just the sort of a citizen of this republic I was before the war, and

"What do you mean with what?"

I was fast losing coherency. It goaded me to find that my two best friends were so unresponsive about this important matter.

"I mean how are you going to organize them? What inducements will you make? What will you tell them they can get out of it?"

"There you go," I shouted, "putting it on that low level of selfish personal interest. I shan't tell them they can get anything out of it except a consciousness of service of the highest kind to their city and to their country—the same sort of service they gave when they went and fought in this war. That's what I shall tell them, and that's how I shall get them."

Jimmie looked at Fred, and both laughed.

"Poor old chap," said Fred. "Must be shell shock. Mind broken under the strain. Ought to go to California or Florida and do nothing but count seagulls for six months. Pitiful case, really."

I rose from my chair and said: "I thought the war might have stirred something in you besides an appetite for beefsteak and pie, pulled you away from golf and polo and bridge and the shimmy dance, but I must be wrong. Is it possible that you are not awake to the tremendous problems pressing on our people—on the whole world—for solution—reconstruction, readjustment, self determination, and the spread of democracy and—and—everything?"

I was impressed by an editorial article I read that had these ideas in it and I thought I could remember the language, but it got away from me. So I had to

quit right in the middle of my peroration, but I believe it just the same.

Fred and Jimmie grinned amiably. I saw I was getting nowhere. So I changed my tactics.

"Boys," I appealed, "think it over. It really is a big opportunity to do something. These soldiers are ripe for it. We can form them into an organization that will be a great political power, and if we succeed here we can spread out over the state, maybe over the whole Nation. It's a great game, I tell you, a big chance. Come on with me."

"George," asked Fred, "are you serious about this? Do you mean it? Or are you only spouting?"

"I never was more in earnest in my life."

"That doesn't get us anywhere. You never were very earnest about anything. Do you mean this?"

"I do."

"Are you going into it?"

"I am."

Fred beckoned to Peter and asked for his hat.

"Will you go in with me?" I asked.

"No," Jimmie replied, as he lighted another cigarette, "but we'll stick around and be ready to give you first aid when you come out."

the lists of loans forthcoming, falling due and renewed, the statement of the bank's condition on that day, and at other tabulations, and was duly gratified for there never was anything to be alarmed over. I applauded the news of the opening of new and important accounts, and otherwise comported myself as the other directors did, who were longer in the board than I, the baby member, was; but my chief function was to vote "Aye" to every proposition the president made.

It was interesting, for I soon learned that a meeting of the board of directors of a bank is the liveliest sort of a gossip shop. All other important business men not on the board, and their affairs, are discussed with entire freedom. My service taught me the business unwisdom of judging by appearances. I found that many a man I thought was securely well-to-do was skating on thin financial ice, and that many another man I fancied was of no business account stood well with Mr. Hull. I learned all about those who were asking to extend their notes, and joined the general hammering of those poor devils who were constantly seeking to kite checks, to coax us to permit over-drafts, and get money on cat-and-dog securities.

I found out who it was who borrowed the money to buy a seven thousand dollar automobile so he could outsplash his neighbors, and discovered the identities of those of our citizens who were in hot water always because of the extravagances of their wives. I knew which of the city officials had to discount their pay vouchers to keep going, who some of the promoters were, and had an occasional peep at the financial

arrangements of a number of double lives. Not much escapes the board of directors of a bank. It is a weekly compendium of business and social life.

The directors were substantial active business men, mostly, but included a lawyer or two, and a couple of retired capitalists—leading citizens, or trying to be. Some of them put on high hats and went to church on Sunday, and others put on caps and went golfing or automobiling. They belonged to the various civic and commercial organizations, had been active in Liberty Loan, Red Cross and other war drives, and were paying their increased taxes patriotically, albeit with a few grumbles now and then. They gave little attention to politics, so far as I knew, except in the last week or ten days of a campaign, when they talked and spluttered a good deal and generally went to the country on election day without voting. They were average American citizens, for the most part, with growing families, and all doing well; not the biggest business men in the city, except Mr. Johnson and Mr. Perkins, who were great merchants and directors of other banks, also; but well rated. Most of them were bored when the opera came to town and their wives dragged them to it, preferring girl-and-music shows. They nearly all condemned cigarettes and wrist watches.

They were merciless to the financial fakers and bilkers and to their rivals in trade, but let a man who was enterprising and financially straight, come along with a chance to do something for himself, and extend the aggregate business of the city and they would vote to help him, give him credit to his limit, and be easy in the matter of extensions. The chief, actuating im-

was astonished to hear that Mr. Perkins, a few days later, advanced Twining four thousand dollars, taking as security fifty-one per cent. of the stock of the company.

Presently, the business was concluded, and Mr. Hull distributed the five-dollar fees. Some of the bigger banks pay ten dollars, and the biggest one twenty, but five is our figure. A conservative sum—as Mr. Perkins remarked. Before the war we got gold pieces, but now Mr. Hull distributes paper money, I observed. He said he was holding his gold. That “his” sounded very reassuring and proprietary, for I knew Mr. Hull to be a most conservative banker. After we adjourned the directors asked me questions about my experiences in the war, and while I was answering them it flashed over me that this is a good opportunity to put out a feeler about my political idea. These men are all men of affairs, and all of them older than I am.

So, after I finished a tribute to the American buck private, I said: “By the way, gentlemen, it is quite possible that these returned soldiers may make themselves felt in politics.”

“How so?” asked Mr. Johnson.

“Why, there will be about ten thousand of them. Suppose some man of good organizing ability and high ideals comes along and forms those returned soldiers into a political body, or into a body, to put it another way, that may not be political, in its outer aspects—may be social, or protective, or for insurance or something like that, but that can be used for politics, just the same. Wouldn’t that be a big force in politics?

For example, couldn't this city's present administration be turned out and a clean, decent one installed?"

The directors were interested and curious. Mr. Hull was annoyed. I could see that by the expression on his face. He laughed, though, as if it was funny.

"Pshaw!" he said, waving his hand as if to dismiss the whole matter, "nobody will try that."

"Don't be so sure of it."

"Who will?" Mr. Hull's laugh stopped short.

"Perhaps I will."

"You?" Half a dozen of the directors joined in that loud and astonished query.

"Yes. I think it might be done."

"Now, look here, George," said Mr. Perkins, pushing up to me. "Just because you were in the Army don't get any fool notions in your head. We are going along quite comfortably here, and don't want any disturbance in our local political affairs."

That feazed me. One of our great merchants and civic props actually was opposed to political reform!

"Why, Mr. Perkins," I said, "you don't mean to say that this city administration is satisfactory to you; that it is clean and decent and what it should be?"

"Perhaps not what it should be, in the strict sense," he replied, "but it is the best we can get without great turmoil and disturbance of business. We do not desire a change at present, do we?" He appealed to the other directors.

"No," they answered with depressing unanimity. "Things are going very well at present."

"Very well!" I exclaimed, "with Bill Hunkins and Tom Pendergrast——"

"George," interrupted Mr. Hull, "pardon me if I speak plainly to you. You are evidently under a misapprehension as to Mr. Pendergrast. I feel it my duty to set you right. You should not believe these sensational, yellow newspaper stories about Mr. Pendergrast. He is a public-spirited citizen."

"Tom Pendergrast is?" I was amazed at Mr. Hull's defense of the boss.

"Certainly, and a warm friend of this bank. You should know, if you do not, that Mr. Pendergrast keeps seven hundred thousand dollars of city treasury money on deposit in this bank, and, it is hoped, will increase that sum to a million shortly. We pay two per cent. interest on that money on monthly balances. We loan that money at five or six per cent. on commercial paper to our customers, making a very handsome profit each year."

I did know we have city deposits, but I didn't know just why and how we have them until Mr. Hull explained in that patronizing manner of his. I thought we have these deposits because the Third National is a good, safe bank.

"It isn't Pendergrast's money," I protested.

"No, but because of his influence with the present administration he directs where it shall be deposited. We need him in our business."

He stopped and smiled at me as if he had given me a great light. He had, too, but not in the way he thought.

"Furthermore," added Mr. Johnson, "there is that

matter of the renewal for the franchises of the South Side electric lines, and the new power and lighting rates, to say nothing of the extensions of the streets we need to connect up that tract myself and some of my friends are handling out Edgewood way. Mr. Pendergrast and Mr. Hunkins have the say in all these important matters, and it would be deplorable if they were annoyed in any way just at present. They are reasonably disposed."

"All nonsense," put in G. H. Carstairs, who owns a quarry and sells crushed rock to the city. "Don't be putting any wild notions into the heads of these soldiers. Bill Hunkins is a man who can be depended upon. He always keeps his word."

"You bet!" exclaimed Alonzo A. Collins, a real estate man, "and so does Pendergrast. He's promised to take that Imrey tract for a city park extension as soon as the new Board of Aldermen is elected."

Mr. Hull took up the recital again. "Besides; while it may fairly be held that the average of intellectuality of the Aldermen may not be high they are always under control. Also, the Appraisers are fair men and will listen to reason in the matter of assessments and tax levies, and the other city departments are in excellent hands. Most of what you hear about these men is the invention of their political enemies. I consider them safe men, and useful."

"Well, I don't," I said, "I think the politics of this city need cleaning up, and there may be a way to do it."

"Surely, George, you are not serious?" Mr. Perkins was solicitous. "This must be some joke you are playing on us. You have no intention of trying to

start a political row now when we need all the support we can get from the city administration for our various projects."

"You need all the support you can get from the city administration?" I repeated, nonplussed at this view of it. "Good Lord! I thought it was you men who supported the city administration instead of the city administration supporting you."

"Well," soothed Mr. Perkins, "you do not understand. You are young and impressionable. Go and talk this over with your father."

"I have talked it over with my father," I blurted. Instantly, I knew that was a stupid thing to say. These men would ask me what my father said. If I told them I would not only uphold their contentions, but would weaken and, in a way, humiliate myself. They mustn't know that Dad had pooh-poohed at me.

Mr. Hull saw the opening instantly. "What did your father say?" he asked in a tone that made me feel like a child being questioned as to his sin before he is spanked.

"None of your damned business what he said!" came to my lips, but I didn't say it. I ought to keep my temper. I knew that.

"We haven't finished discussing it yet," I answered, trying to create the impression that the matter was an open question between us.

Mr. Hull patted me on the shoulder as he might pat a little boy. His gentle tapping made me shiver with indignation.

"My dear boy," he said, in his suavest manner, thereby increasing my indignation, "you don't have to

tell us, for we are very well aware what he said. I'll bet a cookie I know. He set it down as a boyish whim, and advised you to get back to business and leave politics to the politicians. John Talbot is a safe and sane citizen."

That smug interpretation backed me into a corner. I couldn't continue the conversation. There was no sympathy nor encouragement here. I took my hat and started out.

Some of the directors chuckled. I was quite sure I heard the thin cackle of Perkins. I turned at the door, blazing: "Well, anyway," I said, "I am going to make a try at it, notwithstanding the personal inconveniences to you gentlemen if I get anywhere with it."

"What will you do to us, George?" asked Mr. Hull, as if he didn't give a hoot what I tried to do. "Not put us out of business, I hope." Apparently, he thought they had spiked me.

"I'll make you pay more than two per cent. interest on city money, for one thing," I answered and tried to bang the door to emphasize my threat. But I was balked in that final demonstration. The door is fitted with one of those patent non-banging appliances and responded to my violent tug by closing after me gently and noiselessly. Even the fittings of that bank are against me!

CHAPTER IV

STEVE FOX APPROVES

CONSIDERABLY miffed, I walked up to the club and got my mail. There were two invitations to large, formal dances, a bid to dinner at the Country Club, with dancing afterwards; a notice that I was expected to contribute to and participate in the after-the-war reorganization of The Bachelors, our most fashionable dancing organization; and a note from Mrs. Charley Summerhays, the leader of what the papers call the "younger married set," asking me to a dance at her house on Tuesday week. Mrs. Summerhays held out the lure that she would have Caparelli's Jazz Band at her affair. We do considerable dancing in our city.

I put these various communications in my coat pocket and decided to go up to the club library to think things over. I was sure to be undisturbed there. No member of our club ever goes to the library except to sleep. The big leather chairs are excellent mediums for rest and recuperation late in the afternoon. There are placards commanding "Silence!" posted about the room, but those are not operative during the sleeping period. Some of our members who patronize the library sleep stertorously.

Old Peter McWhirter, who made a couple of mil-

lions in oil, lives in the club and is our most evident antique, has a joke about club libraries that he tells insistently. It is his pet joke, and he is proud of it. He takes it out and exhibits it every time he can corner a listener. Peter would be without means of conversational human intercourse if he were deprived of that joke, for one Scotch and soda stupefies him for three hours, and by the time he is showing signs of life everybody has gone to dinner. They put him to bed at eight o'clock.

"Library?" squeaks Peter. "Ever heard that good one about the Atheneum Club library in London? Most exclusive and gloomiest club in the world. Get that? Awful morgue. Well, a man came down stairs from the library one day and said to the steward: 'My good fellow, I wish you would remove Sir John Montmorency from the library. He has been dead for three days.'"

That isn't a hard joke to take, for it only lasts a minute or so, but if, by any unlucky chance, Henry Smathers happens to be about during Peter's recital you are lost. Henry champs at the bit until Peter cackles his finish, and does not wait for the laugh. He has an Atheneum story—the one about the new member and the old member, and the dinner the old member gave the new member because the new member spoke to the old member, who had belonged to the club for twenty-five years and nobody in it had ever spoken to him before—you know. It takes Henry Smathers forty-five minutes to tell that story, for he embellishes it with a history of the club, minute descriptions of the prune-colored pants the flunkies wear, and goes

learnedly into the emotions of the two men and the psychology of it all.

Often, there is nobody about but Peter and Henry. Somebody should make a movie of those occasions. Peter tries to tell his story to Henry and Henry endeavors to unload his story on Peter. Henry generally wins, as he is younger than Peter, and they cart Peter away to bed after Henry puts on his final flourish: "That's it, you see. Member for twenty-five years and nobody in the club ever spoke to him before. Extraordinary, eh, what?"

Peter was the only person in the smoking room as I came through. He was huddled down in a big chair, and looked miserable and old—the mere frail shadow of a man. I thought it would be a real kindness to cheer him up. So I walked over to him, and said cheerily: "Well, Mr. McWhirter, how are you to-day?"

"Poorly," he croaked.

"Oh, I'm sorry. It seems to me you look especially well. Hope you'll soon get your pep back."

Then I deliberately set the snare for myself. "I am going up to the library," I said, and waited.

Peter rolled a yellowed eye at me. He tried to rise to the occasion, but he couldn't. He struggled valiantly, and then fell back: "Know a good one about club libraries, but can't tell it. Some other time. Ate a piece of an egg for lunch, and it distresses me."

I went along, thinking of my section of the Sam Lazarus steak, and Peter's piece of an egg. I hope I'll never be as old as Peter. He seems as ancient as the pyramids to me—fifty years older than I am, but

Peter doesn't think he's old. He reads pieces in the papers about Levi P. Morton and John Burroughs, and fancies himself a kid. As nearly as I can figure it out, no man thinks he is old. I was talking to Dad about it one day. Dad is fifty-four. I spoke of a man of sixty as old.

"Mere child," said Dad. "Age is comparative. A boy of seventeen thinks a man of forty is old and so on."

"What is your definition of an old man?"

"An old man," said Dad, "is a man who is twenty years older than you are."

There was no one in the library, not even the librarian. I selected a big, red-leather chair over in the corner, settled myself in it, and reviewed my day.

"Three times at bat and struck out three times," I thought. "A percentage of zero—zero—zero. The noes have it, unanimously. Dad says it is foolish. Fred and Jimmie say it is assinine, and the Third National crowd say it is a combination of both, as well as bad for business. Total loss and no insurance, so far."

I expected to sit there and think out a programme clearly. Instead, I found that I couldn't think clearly. The fact is, I only had a vague conception, not a series of premises and conclusion. I was firm in my belief that the returning soldiers are so drilled in the value of organization that they can be put together, or held together, to do things in peace just as they did them in war. They will appreciate the value of political participation by their solidarity, as that is the way we utilize organization for an effect on govern-

ment in this country; and government means power, and power means successful politics. That is plain enough.

Government — means — power — and — power — means — successful — politics. That formula repeated itself in my mind a dozen times. Then it reversed itself — successful — politics — means — power — and — power — means — government. That was more logical. Then I saw that I had left out organization. I reconstructed it — organization — means — successful — politics — and — successful — politics — means — power — and — power — means — government. I conned that repeatedly. I saw the thing work out. Ten thousand soldiers were formed in a all-for-one — one-for-all body behind me. We marched to the polls and threw Tom Pendergrast and Bill Hunkins out. I could see Pendergrast running to escape our wrath. We took over the City Hall. I was mayor. I walked out on the steps of the Hall, and made a speech while my organized soldiers and their women folk cheered me wildly. I swept the offices clean of all the political parasites and put a soldier in each one. I installed the women in places suitable for them. There were columns in the papers about it. It was complete. It was epochal.

Then Dad came along, and Fred Daskin, and Jimmie Chambers, and a procession of the directors of the Third National, headed by Mr. Hull and Mr. Perkins, and they dragged me out of the Mayor's chair, and stuck me back in the pump works, and I heard them say: "Of course you can't do it. It's foolish. It's worse than that. It isn't your job. You can't whip Tom Pendergrast and Bill Hunkins, and if you do

you'll spoil a lot of things we are interested in. It's filthy work. Forget it and go back to business."

"I can beat them!" I shouted, struggling to get free. "I can—I can——" and I looked up from the leather chair and found Peter McWhirter, supported by a club servant in uniform, weaving back and forth on his unsteady legs over me, and the "Silence" signs glaring coldly down at me.

"George," cackled Peter McWhirter, "I see the library got you. Gets 'em all. Reminds me of a story about the library of the Atheneum in London. It seems——"

I fled to the other end of the great room, and the servant led Peter out, still cackling his story. It made me laugh to think I had been found by Peter, and it made me stop laughing to think that I went to sleep over my plan. But the dream I had made an impression. My defiance remained strong in my mind and my shout: "I can—I can!"

"What's to hinder my doing it? I'm not beaten yet. I know it can be done and I'm going to do it or—or—bust!" I concluded, not being able, at the moment, to conceive a more refined manner in which the enterprise might personally finish if unsuccessful.

The determination grew stronger and stronger. My rest had given me new courage. "I'll try it," I swore to myself. "I'll start an organization of the men who went to war, if that can be done, and I'll try to use that organization not for any selfish ends but for the advantage of this city. That's settled." I was all enthusiasm.

Enthusiasm is a great thing, but the war taught me

that there should be a side dish of precaution served with it. My company took a nest of machine guns near Fismes one day with our bayonets and our bare hands; but when the Colonel came to see me in the hospital he said, glorious as the exploit was—I am quoting him—we might have done it easier, and as effectively, perhaps, if we had come in from the sides instead of making a straight rush at the Huns. I always shall remember that.

“I’ll try it. That’s all well enough, but I can’t do it alone. I need help, and sympathetic coöperation, and a lot of each. Dad is against me. Fred and Jimmie, my closest friends, are scoffers. The men at the bank are horrified for business reasons. Who will I get?”

I catalogued those who might be useful, and dismissed most of them, holding out a few as possible, but without much hope that they would take part. Most of the men I knew, I concluded, would have either the Dad and Third National view of it, or look at it the same way Fred and Jimmie do. Then I thought of Steve Fox. That was an inspiration.

Steve Fox and I were seatmates and classmates at the grammar school and classmates in High School. Then I went to college, and Steve got a reporter’s job on the News, our biggest morning paper. Steve always had an edge on me in school, for he is quicker-witted than I am, and is a natural born politician. He ran all the school politics, manipulated the secret societies, and was forever making combinations, and having caucuses, and voting the students as he chose. He and I are close friends. He now does the city politics for

the News, and reports the state legislature. Pretty soon they'll send him to Washington. He has a great flair for politics. Steve knows our local politics inside and out, and all the politicians fear him and respect him, for he won't play in with them, and tells the truth about them as much as is compatible with the policy of the paper.

I hustled downstairs and called the News on the telephone. Steve was there.

"Steve, this is George Talbot talking. I want to see you. Come and have dinner with me to-night."

"You're on. Where?"

I looked at my watch, although that was superfluous. The sounds from the smoking room told, unmistakably, that it was about quarter past six.

"Rossiter's at seven o'clock." Rossiter's is a quiet place where there is always something good in the ice-box—game out of season, and early fruit and vegetables.

"It's a bet; seven, at Rossiter's."

As I came out of the telephone booth I put my hand in my coat pocket and felt the invitations. I didn't go into the smoking room. Instead I went into the writing room, sent my politest regrets to each hostess, and to the Bachelors and threw the invitations into the grate.

"No time for that sort of stuff now," I thought, and I felt righteous and inspired and consecrated—sort of an I-come-to-deliver-you feeling, as nearly as I can analyze it.

Sam Abernathy came in as I was putting on my overcoat. "Cocktail, George?" he asked.

"No; thanks."

Sam stopped. "Wherefore this sudden access of virtue, Georgie?" he asked. "We don't go dry until July first, you know. Better get a few while you can."

"Don't want any, thanks."

"It's true, then?"

"What's true?"

"Fred Daskin told me this afternoon that you have a glare in your eyes and are going to reform the world, including Tom Pendergrast and Bill Hunkins. Good luck, only don't let them catch you at it."

I could hear them laughing in the smoking room before I got my hat and stick. Sam hurried in to spread the news.

"I'll show them," I declaimed to myself. That was a consolatory determination. It helped a lot.

Steve was waiting at Rossiter's, talking politics with Rossiter himself, who is one of Tom Pendergrast's men. Steve knows everybody in the city, apparently. I saw him walking down Main Street one day arm in arm with Orlando J. Huggins, and Orlando J. is the most-alooft personage we have. He was first assistant secretary of state for six weeks once, at the wind-up of an administration, and never recovered; and I've seen Steve in intimate discourse with Tony Milano, who is the Italian boss, although he printed a story on Tony one time that made Tony swear he'd stiletto Steve.

Tony went up to get his final naturalization papers. The judge questioned him about his knowledge of America.

"Have you read the Constitution of the United States, Mr. Milano?"

"Yes, sir."

"What do you think of it?"

"I think it are very nice."

Still, Steve is always getting away with things like that. "Hello, Steve!" I said.

"Hello, George! What's on your mind?"

"Let's get some food and I'll tell you."

Rossiter had a contraband canvasback in the ice box, and he fixed that for us, and some other things, including a little of the champagne saved for his regulars. Steve and I talked mostly about the Army while we were eating. Steve went into the Military Intelligence as a captain and made a record. He was stationed in New York and dug up a good many pro-German gentlemen who were needed at and sent to Fort Oglethorpe. Rossiter buzzed along with some especial cigars, and after the coffee came Steve, again:

"What's on your mind, George?"

"Steve, I've got an idea about politics. I'm thinking of going into politics, in fact."

Steve laughed. "Say not so," he said. "You'll soil your lily-white hands, and may put a daub or two on your hitherto spotless reputation—if such it is. What can you do in politics?"

"I don't know. That's what I want to talk to you about."

"Yes, yes; go on."

"Look here, Steve; take this seriously, please."

"My boy, I'm as serious as a woman's club discussing pre-Raphaelism. Proceed."

"I'll try to explain it to you, but I haven't got it very clearly myself. It's only the germ of an idea so far, but this is it: I went into the Army. You know I didn't do much but play around before that. Well, the Army taught me a lot of things, and gave me a lot of ideas, and the principal idea is that if somebody, me, for instance, and some others who think as I do, can hold together these soldiers who are coming back to this town, organize them, and keep them in line, a lot can be done in the way of cleaning up this city, getting a better administration, and putting things on a higher basis."

"Might be."

Then I outlined my thoughts to him, speaking more freely than I had to any of the others. I gave him my ideas as to the view of the soldier, of the benefits that might be derived, and pointed out that now is the time to go at it when the punch of organization is still in them, and the recollection of its effectiveness and value still strong. I talked for half an hour, vaguely, at times, I suppose, but earnestly. The trend of it was that these soldiers might be organized by somebody. Why not me?

"Of course," said Steve, after I had finished, "that isn't an original idea, by a long shot. A hundred thousand men all over this country have had it, and are trying to work it out. The soldiers have it themselves. Everybody's got it. I know that Bill Hunkins is active along those lines, to grab as many of the boys as he can for himself. Half a dozen so-called national organizations are projected. Don't think you are a pioneer in this, for you're not, but if you can

get at it, with your Army experience, and your comradeship established, you may be able to beat some of these other Johnnies out. It will be a tough game."

"I don't care how tough it is. I'm going to tackle it. Will you help?"

"Sure; anything for excitement and copy. I'll tell you a man you ought to talk to."

"Who?"

"Tommie Dowd."

"I never heard of him."

"Probably not, but Pershing has. He pinned a Distinguished Service Cross on Tommie over in France.

CHAPTER V

I HEAR OF DOWD

MIKE DOWD, Tommie's father, keeps a saloon down in the Ninth Ward," Steve continued. "Mike's lament to his cronies over Tommie's lack of business acumen when Tommie announced his plans to study law, is a classic in that neighborhood.

"'The boy's a fool entirely,' wailed Mike. 'I offered to set him up in business with a nice little saloon of his own, and give him a respectable start, and he's gone philanderin' off to study law. Law, is it? God help us that a Dowd should come to such an end.'

"Dowd's saloon is a sort of a political headquarters for the Pendergrast outfit down in the Ninth. All the little ward deals and intrigues are framed there. Tommie grew up in that atmosphere, but was not spoiled by it. He is bright and keen, and he listened and learned when they'd let him, but even when he got past boyhood went no further than that. Mrs. Dowd is a good, religious woman. She sent Tommie to the parochial school and to the Jesuit College that Brother Francis Xavier runs,—ever know Brother Francis Xavier?—a fine citizen with the unerring instinct of spotting the boys with a talent for oratory and debate,

and the development of them. He paid a good deal of attention to Tommie, and when Tommie finished and got his diploma he was, among other things, a fair kid logician and debater and could make a passable oration. He's developed that faculty since. He talks pretty well.

"He was a good athlete, specializing on baseball, and became one of those youthful phenom pitchers, who did stunts like one and two-hit games to his opponents, a big, up-standing chap with a world of speed. They tried to get him for professional ball, but he had other ideas. While Brother Francis Xavier was training Tommie in debate and disputation, and teaching him the elementary classics, Tommie was lusting for adventure. He wanted to see things, and do things. So three weeks after he graduated he slipped up to the recruiting office one day and enlisted in the Marines. His size got him past, and the physical perfection of him. He absolved home difficulties by giving the name of a doting aunt as next of kin, and she stood for it. He was eighteen then, a big, husky chap. He was three years in the Marines and saw service in Santo Domingo, Haiti, Panama, China—all over the place.

"When he came back home he said he had had enough of soldiering, and would go into the law. Old Mike again pleaded with him to retain inviolate the respectability of the Dowds, and if he wouldn't let him open a saloon for him at least to tend bar at the old home place, and thus gradually take over its conduct. Tommie was adamant. Mike was about to cast him off, but his mother interceded and the old man allowed

Tommie to live at home while he studied. He passed his preliminary examinations after boning up with Brother Francis Xavier, and learned stenography and typewriting, which eventually gave him a small job in a law office.

"All the time he stayed in the Ninth Ward, mixing with the boys who grew up with him, listening to the politics, getting acquainted, and keeping in touch with that angle of life. After he was admitted he got a very junior partnership with a big firm, and started at it. Then the war came. Tommie didn't wait for a chance at an officer's training camp, nor ask any of his political friends to help him to a commission. He jumped right into the regulars as a private—enlisted before we declared war, at the first signs of it. Naturally, with his ability, and his military training behind him, he became a non-com. in no time, and was soon a top sergeant. He went to France with the First Division, and was all through it over there, with that fighting bunch. He got the Croix de Guerre for some stunt he pulled, and the Distinguished Service Cross for another. After it was over he got out as quickly as he could, came home, and now he's back at the law.

"I don't know any young fellow who has a more detailed knowledge of this political game here, nor more definite ideas about the way it is played. Tommie can get in with the gang in two minutes if he wants to, but he doesn't. He knows too much about it. Besides, he has your view of it, too; only, if you'll excuse me, a lot better thought out and closer to the minds and methods of the soldiers, for he served with them, right among them, all the way through.

"I've talked some with him. He thinks, as you seem to, that there is a great chance to do something big with these returned soldiers. You'd better get in touch with him."

"He's the man," I said, much impressed with Steve's recital. "Where is he?"

"You can find him to-morrow at the office of Spalding, Sinclair and Jackson, Occidental Building. I'll give you a card to him."

Steve wrote a few lines on a card, and we walked uptown together.

"By the way, George," said Steve, as we parted in front of the News office, "Dowd has a good many convictions that will not jibe with your view and circumstances of life. He isn't a socialist, per se, but his sympathies are all with the men who work. He is inclined to be contemptuous of more or less gay social butterflies like you, and holds that political conditions here are as they are because the average business man, the big business man, and the idle rich take no active participating interest beyond complaining at them and damning the system. A man with a million dollars, or the heir to ten millions, doesn't awe him a particle, and he talks plainly on occasion, so plainly that it makes the average millionairish head ache. He's a straight-spoken, hard-headed, two-fisted person, outside, but when you get into him you will find that he assays pretty heavily to the pound in common-sense idealism, which is the best way I can describe it. That is, he has a reform streak without the usual mush—and—impractical trimmings.

"He has an ironical sense of humor, joshes a good

an Alderman of him to give tone to that gang of highbinders.

Porter was a frightful bore, who made speeches on every occasion, and deviled the editors to get them printed. He hadn't had a thought for forty years, and could use more words in setting forth that condition of his mind than any man in the world; but he always voted right on the Board, which was the main point. Several men were mentioned in Steve's article as possible successors to Porter. "No candidate is selected as yet," said Steve. "The political destinies of the Second Ward are in the hands of William Hunkins. The Pendergrast crowd are not much interested. There is no chance for them to win, and they may not contest."

The telephone rang as I was about to call the office of Spalding, Sinclair and Jackson. It was Fred Daskin.

"Hello, George! How's the military Mark Hanna this morning?"

"Cut that out," I snarled. "I've had enough of that."

"Oh, very well, only I was just reading in the News about that vacancy in the Board of Aldermen from your ward. Why don't you start your career that way, George? Many a man who has risen to political eminence made a lowly start. Of course, history records few who began so far down scale as our Board of Aldermen, but I feel you have it in you to conquer even that handicap. You'd be a grand little Alderman, and could get us the civic auditorium for nothing for big dances."

"Cheese it!"

"Besides," continued Daskin, "all the eminent up-lifters tell us that reform is best accomplished from within rather than from without. You'll be right there with Bill Hunkins, and Tom Pendergrast and all the boys. Better go to it. I pledge you the support of the Bachelors right here and now. Meantime, come on and make up a foesome at Weehawis. How about it?"

"I'm busy. Good-by." I slammed the receiver on the hook. Fred Daskin makes me tired. Joshing is all right. I do some of it myself, but there are limits.

After I had cooled down I called Spalding, Sinclair and Jackson, and asked:

"Is Mr. Dowd in?"

"He is. Who is calling, please?"

"Captain George Talbot."

Presently, I heard: "This is Mr. Dowd."

"I have a card of introduction to you from Steve Fox, and I want to talk to you on a political matter. When may I call?"

"Come now."

Half an hour later I walked into Dowd's room. A big, broad-shouldered, red-checked, black-haired man rose and held out his hand.

"I'm Dowd," he said.

CHAPTER VI

DOWD SETS ME STRAIGHT

I KNOW your father," Dowd continued, after pulling out a chair for me. "We got well acquainted during that row over the new water works. A fine man. Hard as nails. Demands results, but he has imagination, for all that."

"Dad has? Why all he sees is pumps."

"Do you think so?" Dowd's black eyes twinkled at me, and he smiled a little smile. "But, then, sons don't know much about their fathers, do they?"

"They know as much as fathers know about their sons."

"May be so. Excuse me. I didn't intend to start anything. Can I be of any service to you?"

"Perhaps we may be of some service to one another. I was talking to Steve Fox last night, and outlined an idea I have in mind. It's about the returned soldiers. I was in the Army."

Dowd bowed in recognition of that important fact. "Back up," I said to myself. "Where do you get off with this talk about being in the Army to a man who fought with the First Division, and has a Croix de Guerre and a Distinguished Service Cross?"

"I don't mean that that gives me any particular dis-

tion. So were a lot of other chaps in the Army. What I mean is that as I was in the Army I have a sort of an appreciation of what the big lesson of the Army is."

"What do you think that lesson is?"

"That the individual is helpless, while the organization of individuals is resistless."

I rather fancied that sentence. I thought it out myself. Dowd received it calmly. In fact, he received it with a smile, and said:

"It's simple enough. How does the Federation of Labor, or any labor union, get its results? How do the bosses hold this city in their grasp? How does your father sell more pumps than the Glassford outfit? Organization. That's all there is to it. The labor men are organized. Bill Hunkins has an organization, so has Tom Pendergrast, and so has John Talbot, and they are efficient. That's the solution of any problem in this country—efficient organization. It didn't take the deaths of twenty million men and the expenditure of a hundred billion dollars to prove that. Those bloody and expensive details simply emphasized the fact."

He seemed serious enough, but there was a twinkle in his eye, and a sort of an amused tolerance about him that made me swallow hard once or twice.

"Even so," I said, plunging ahead, "what you say merely gives point to what I have in mind."

"And that is?"

"An organization of these returned soldiers, in this city, for the purpose of getting a better administration, through the political strength of that organization, and

to secure such incidental benefits as may accrue for the soldiers themselves."

I thought this would be a free and easy talk, but here I was searching my vocabulary for sonorous rhetoric and statesmanlike phrases, talking as an uplift editorial writer writes.

Dowd smiled again. This smile was almost a laugh. It was embarrassing. I felt as if I had declaimed to him that the world is round, or sugar is sweet or imparted some other similar important information. Dad makes me feel that way now and then. My vanity gave me the cue for a dignified exit. But my common sense whispered: "Hang on! Steve says this chap may be useful."

"Yes," he said, "that might be done. The idea occurred to some of us before we came home from France. A few of my friends and myself are already working out such a plan."

"You are?"

There was both surprise and dismay in that question. "They've beaten me to it," I thought, and a future devoted to the pump business stretched drably before me.

"We are, but we have no monopoly on it." Dowd saw my dismay and tried to cheer me up.

"A lot of other people are working on it, too, both here and elsewhere. That doesn't worry us, and it shouldn't worry you, if you really are in earnest, and don't want to play this game just for the personal glorification of it. The whole success of what is done will depend on how it is organized. We think we'll

have the better organization. Maybe not, but we think so."

"Who's we?"

"A few friends of mine."

"Oh."

Now it was time for me to go. I wasn't getting anywhere. I rose. Dowd put out a detaining hand. "Don't hurry," he said. "Let's talk it over." He offered me a cigar and lighted one himself. Ordinarily, I do not smoke cigars, but I'd smoke that one if it killed me.

"Just what is your idea of what can be done with these boys who were in the Army and their women folks?"

I hashed over what I had been saying to Dad, and Fred and Jimmie, and the rest of them. Dowd listened patiently. I felt like a student trying to state a conclusion without any definite knowledge of the contributing reasons therefor.

After I had finished Dowd puffed a few times at his cigar.

"You have the outline of it," he said, "but not the detail. I had the advantage of you. I was with the boys all the time. I ate with them, slept with them, fought with them, and heard their talk. Will it bore you if I give you my idea of what is in the minds of those lads?"

"I wish you would."

I did wish he would. Every time I tried to explain myself I seemed vaguer than the time before. I hadn't developed my idea beyond the germ stage. Perhaps he had. He began:

"This wasn't my first experience with the private soldier. I was three years in the Marines, and got to know the mind of them there. I enlisted in the regulars, and served with the First Division all through the war. We went in as regulars, but replacements made our outfit the same as yours—draft and national guard boys, mostly. Only a few of the originals lasted through. We had enormous casualties.

"I know those soldiers. I know that, although they are not concrete about it, they feel they can do something when they get out of the army. I know that only a small proportion of them fancy military life enough to remain in the service and that what most of them have in mind is, first, to get back to their jobs, and second, to capitalize, in some way, their experiences and associations—their war comradeship—so it may benefit themselves and their country.

"I have read a lot of speeches and articles and editorials about the high ideals of the soldiers and their crusading spirit—the President calls them 'crusading youngsters'—but I take all that with reasonable reserve. I know that the main, actuating idea of those boys over there in France was to whip the Kaiser and get back home, and that the main, actuating idea of the boys in the camps here was to get over there, help whip the Kaiser and come back home. They were vague about the idealism of it, and making the world safe for democracy didn't mean as much to them as the orators said it did. Their chief impulse was that Germany must be beaten, and the United States was the one country that could beat Germany, and that they were the representatives of the United States—their

country—for the job. So they turned in and did that job, and did it with a courage and a dash and an efficiency that ended it half a year before the military experts thought it could be ended. It was an American enterprise dispatched in an American way.

“Now, they are coming back, and what they must be taught in this country is that what they did in France is really what it is, and not what they, mostly, think it is. That is, the real purpose of their fighting and the real meaning of their victory must be impressed on them, for all this talk that the average American private was filled with a crusading spirit, had a mission, and was implanting an ideal when he struck a German with a bayonet, or blew him up with a shell or hand grenade, or drilled a hole in him with a bullet I know to be piffle—talk—words—an assertion of an idealism that did not, and does not exist.

“I know those boys. They went to France to end the war, and end it by killing Germans, and they ended it in exactly that decisive manner. They rushed in at their country’s call and put out the fire, but the reason they put out the fire wasn’t, as the wordsmiths declare, that they understood, completely or idealistically, what the beneficent effects of putting out the fire would be. They didn’t go that far into the matter. The fire was apparent. They saw it, and they put it out.

“Wherefore, I hold it to be the task of those who do think a little more, who realize the idealistic as well as the practical motives of our participation in the war, to sink into the minds of these boys just what their great service is, in terms of world service; and to develop that spirit and service into another spirit and

service that shall continue to exist and be operative in home affairs, and will bring, in its home application, two sorts of benefits: The greater benefit to the community and the lesser, but co-related, benefit to the men themselves.

"In other words, the task of any person who seeks to utilize the strength and comradely spirit and knowledge of organized strength of the soldiers is to explain to them why they have that strength, to show them what they really have done, and to implant in their minds the firm conviction that they must not cease to be soldiers after they are out of their military uniforms but must continue to be civic soldiers, fighting for better domestic conditions as they fought for better world conditions."

Dowd held me at strained attention. He had given some real thought to the subject, not snap-shotted at it like me. "I agree with most of it," I thought. "Anyhow, he has a clearer view than I have. I'll tell him so."

He didn't give me a chance.

"Pardon me," he said, as he lighted his cigar, which had gone out as he talked. "I hope I haven't bored you. I am likely to forget how I outrage my friends with these dull speeches—I suppose we are friends?"

He smiled at me so takingly that I wanted to shout: "Bet your life, Tommie!" but I compromised on: "I hope we shall be."

"So do I. We're having a little meeting next Friday night, at eight o'clock, in Room 48, Tucker Building. I'll be glad if you will come and so will the others.

I am obliged to you for looking me up. Maybe we can help one another."

I rose again. The telephone bell rang. "Send them in," Dowd said.

"Some of the boys from my company," he said. "Don't go."

There was a heavy clumping in the hall. The door was violently opened and three soldiers appeared in uniform. Instantly, Dowd was metamorphosed. He changed from the eloquent talker, who had been dissecting for me the aggregate mind of the soldier, to that very soldier whom he had been analyzing.

"Hello, Tommie! How's every little thing?" They stuck out calloused hands at him.

"Beaucoup," Dowd replied, shaking hands all around, "but I want to put you guys wise to something. You keep out of this dump unless you want to get me fired. The Old Man won't stand for a bunch of hoboes like you messing up the place."

"I'll say he will," said one of them, who had two gold service stripes on the sleeve of his blouse.

"No he won't, Old Timer. You cut it out and meet me at the regular dump."

"Aw, say, Tommie, we didn't mean no harm."

"I know it. I'm just tellin' you. A guy who's a risin' young lawyer has to throw a bluff, don't he, and keep solid with the main squeeze? You wouldn't bring enough business to this shack in forty years to fill a bull bag. Now that you are here, you fightin' sons-of-guns, what's biting you?"

The soldier with the two service stripes motioned towards me with his head.

"He's all right," said Dowd. "Boys, this is Captain Talbot, of the A. E. F. He was over there, too."

From long habit, the three soldiers stiffened as if to salute.

"Nix," said Dowd. "He's out, and one of us. What's your troubles?"

"You know that gang down in the Eleventh Ward. Well, they're playin' 'round with the Pendergrast outfit. We got wise to them last night. They're goin' to have a meetin' to-night and we thought we'd come up and ask you if it wouldn't be a good plan to bust in on them, and put the love of the Lord into them, just for luck."

"Not on your life," said Dowd. "Lay off on that. No rough stuff goes. Leave 'em to me."

I went out followed by Dowd's "See you Friday night."

"Steve is right," I thought. "He's smart and he's a mixer."

CHAPTER VII

I MEET HUNKINS

YOU certainly can get action in politics after you get started, and the chap was right who said that it makes strange bedfellows. Not that I am sleeping with any unusual citizen as yet, but that I can if I want to. Of course, I am not really in politics but, apparently, you don't have to be really in, in certain cases, to be remarked.

I don't see what there is so bizarre about a man like myself making a straight statement about there being a chance to do something in this city in the way of reform; but from the commotion what I did say has made in our set you'd think I painted myself pea green and made a parade down Main Street clad in no other raiment with a gladiolus behind my ear. Fred Daskin, and Jimmie Chambers, and Sam Abernathy spread the news, and for the next three or four days I was joshed all over the place, referred to as a rising young reformer, and so on, while the Elder Brethren at the club held an inquest over me and formally decried and viewed with grave alarm my "socialistic" tendencies. Dad is interested. He questioned me rather closely once or twice, and intimated, at the end of each session, that my job is waiting for me at the pump works.

They backed me into a corner at the Country Club one night, and I told a lot of them all about themselves. I don't remember all I said, but it was to the broad, general effect that they are civic slackers; and it made them pretty sore. They roasted me, joshed me, burlesqued me and cussed me. The consensus of opinion, as I gather it, is that I am a sort of congenital idiot with no appreciation of the proper and conventional duties and privileges and obligations of my station, and, especially, that I do not know when I am well off. Going into politics, to those folks, seems to be synonymous with going slumming and never coming back. It appears, if I persist, that I shall commit the enormous crime of associating with crass and low-flung persons who do not know what a niblick is, and have no appreciation of the proper moment at which to double no trumps, to say nothing of owning not a single polo pony, nor anything with more class than a flivver car. That's it—class!

I've thought that crowd over, and tabbed them up. You'd think, to hear their exclamations of wonder and disgust, that their forebears certainly made their marks as signatories to the Magna Charta; and I know that the fathers of most of them, and the grandfathers of all of them, began so close to the common earth that the smell of the soil hung to them for years. They didn't budge me an inch. Neither did Dad, although I think, after our conversations, that Dad isn't talking to stop me but is talking to find out if I really have an idea and a determination. However, that's enough of that phase of my difficulties. It's neither so interesting nor so important as something else that happened.

I talked to Dowd on Friday morning, and wrangled with my social equals until the following Tuesday. By that time somebody had introduced a new dance, direct from one of the leading cabarets of Broadway, and they forgot my plan to stray away from their upper and exclusive circle in the rush to acquire the wiggles and wriggles of that jazzed and jerky novelty.

On Wednesday morning I had a letter that made me blink. It was a short letter written in a clerkly sort of a hand, on paper of the best quality. It was dated Tuesday and read:

"I shall be glad if you can find it convenient to call at my house, 76 Martin Street, to-morrow, Wednesday, evening at eight o'clock, to discuss a personal and political matter. If you cannot come please call me by 'phone to-morrow morning, Main 66. If I do not hear from you in that manner I shall expect you."

It was signed: "Very truly yours, William Hunkins."

Hunkins! The boss! What did he want with me? I read the letter half a dozen times, trying to get from it more than the bald invitation to come and discuss "a personal and political matter." It was beyond me. My first impulse was to go to the telephone and tell him that I could have no dealings with a man like him. I didn't. What do I know about Hunkins? Nothing but what I have heard. I know him by sight, and that is all, except for report and rumor. Still, he who touches pitch, and so forth. Pshaw! It will be a good opportunity to study him. Besides, and this is the truth of it, I am so curious to find out what it is about that it seems a century until eight o'clock.

Martin Street is a cross street in the Fourth Ward,

which is a middle-class section of the city, where small business men and young married people live. Number 76 is a three-storied brick house, not differing in any detail from its neighbors, constructed in a long row of similars. Mostly, the houses in our city have bits of ground about them, but an architect and a builder from Baltimore got loose up in the Fourth Ward one time, and perpetrated these ugly rows. I rang the door bell of Number 76 at eight o'clock.

A maid let me in, informing me: "Mr. Hunkins will be right down."

The room to which she led me was simply furnished, with the wall space largely filled by book-shelves. I looked at the books, an accumulation of those "sets" that are found in so many houses. There was an imposing row of Ruskin, and another of Balzac. The World's Best Literature bloomed redly along two shelves. There were the Complete Poetical Works of Milton, Shakespeare in ten volumes, Darwin, Spencer, Scott, Dickens, the Great Orations of the World, Tennyson, Longfellow, Whittier, the World's Repository of Knowledge in eighteen volumes, and half a dozen other sets of the World's greatest this and the World's greatest that. Keats, Shelley, Chaucer, Wordsworth, in reds, blues and greens, stood stiffly in cultured rows, flanked by Emerson, Thoreau, Macauley, Carlyle, Huxley, Hawthorne, Mill, Kant, Schopenhauer, Adam Smith, Bacon, Motley, Morris—sets—sets—sets. Cooper, Thackeray, George Eliot—a vari-colored riot of the stuff that can be bought by tearing off this coupon and remitting one dollar, with the privilege of examination and return, within five

days, if not perfectly satisfactory and as represented in the advertisement.

"How are you, Captain?"

I turned from my scrutiny of the books, and faced Hunkins—a man of about five feet ten, and weighing not more than a hundred and sixty pounds, smooth-shaven, with plenty of black hair, a longish upper lip, a good supply of chin, and black eyes with fun in them; a largish mouth, and lips with a taking smile to them; dressed in a blue serge suit and wearing a soft blue shirt and a soft white collar; blue tie that matched the serge, blue socks that also matched, and low cut shoes highly polished; no jewelry; clothes well cut and tailored and without a wrinkle; well turned out, intelligent of appearance, less of the cartoonish aspect of a political boss about him than there is about Bishop Sludgers.

"Glad to see you, Mr. Hunkins. I was looking at your books."

"Oh, don't bother with that stuff. Come in here where my real books are."

He motioned to a door, and we entered a smaller room, in which there was a desk, a desk chair, and one other chair, a big book-case, a picture of Colonel Roosevelt. That was all.

"Knew a man once," he said, "who was a stevedore and got rich. His wife moved him away from the docks and uptown into a big house so she could take her rightful place in society. They gave a carte blanche order to the book seller to fix them up a library, and he put in about four kilometers of the same sort of stuff as that out there. Poor chap. His wife made

him try to live up to those books, and he died of humiliation one day when she caught him reading 'The Peep O' Day Boys' in the butler's pantry.

"That stuff out there came with the house when I rented it. I often wonder what those old chaps would think, I mean those writers of what they call the classics, if they could have a look now and see that the posterity they thought they were writing for buys them by the yard if the bindings match with the draperies, and never look into them. These are my real books."

I took a look. He had some of Conrad, Shaw, Wells, Hewlett, Galsworthy, one or two of Bennett, Tarkington, O. Henry, Dunsany, Synge, James Stephens, two of Locke's, all of David Graham Phillips's political novels, Cobb's "Back Home," Harry Leon Wilson's "Ruggles," and several shelves of the best examples of other modern American and English authors—one or two from each; some travel, many essays, both critical and literary, and a lot of biography; a good many Russians, and a shelf of the modern Frenchmen. Lying on the top of his desk were the latest Mencken, the latest Cabell, a collection of Strunsky's satires, and two volumes on after-the-war problems.

"My theory about books is that a man is foolish to waste his time plugging through all any author wrote. I get the best, to my thinking, each author has done, and form my ideas of him from that. Who, in the name of Heaven, has time to grind through all of those voluminous gentlemen? The best of each will tell you all you want to know about them, and their

styles and ideas, and give you a chance to cover the field."

His voice was pleasant and his manner that of a well-read, well-bred person rather than the sublimated ward-heeler I thought him to be. It all surprised and puzzled me. I kept thinking: "This isn't the sort of a Hunkins I expected to find. Not at all. He's not only literate, but he's intelligent. And this place doesn't square with my ideas of the home of a boss. What about those stories I have always heard of the grafting of his gang?"

That thought obsessed me. I couldn't get away from it. I had pictured him surrounded by such expensive junk in the way of furniture and fittings as should be found in the home of a grafter, according to my conceptions of the abiding places of such, and here was Hunkins, our reputed political pirate, living as plainly as a mechanic, except for the books. It was a shock to my pre-conceptions, and before I realized what I was saying I blurted: "Why, Mr. Hunkins, you live very modestly."

Tactful remark, wasn't it; pleasant manner of opening the conversation? I rather expected him to take a chair and hit me, but he didn't. Instead, his eyes twinkled, and he smiled a sort of deprecatory smile.

"Certainly, I spend all the money I can get in debauching the ballot, you know, not on myself. Any of your friends will tell you that."

I couldn't make out whether he was in earnest, or having fun with me, but after having put my foot in it, it was my part to pull it out as best I could, and I made a polite disclaimer: "Oh you don't mean that."

"Don't I?" he laughed. "Well, it's of no consequence. Sit down, please."

He pointed to the one chair that stood by his desk. "All my house is not so sparsely furnished as this room," he said. "There is method in this, not economy. I conduct my trifling personal and party affairs here, and am visited by a somewhat numerous clientele. If I had ten chairs I would have ten of them here at the same time, and if I had two I would have two. So I only have one, and there is always some one waiting to get into it when it is occupied by another. That tends to dispatch, and short stories."

He laughed again—an attractive sort of a scoundrel, this Bill Hunkins!

"However, that's not what I asked you to call here for, and I'm much obliged to you for coming. I thought that the better way for various reasons. I understand you think of going into politics."

"How did you hear that?"

"Oh, I hear almost everything of a political nature that happens, or is talked about in this city, one way or another. Is it true?"

"I don't know whether it is, or not. I have talked about it some, but haven't done anything yet except talk."

"Some of that talk was reported to me. As I gather it you are of the idea that there is grave necessity for cleaning out and dispersing, or jailing, the thieves, robbers, boodlers and reprobates who now have control of the city government, including myself."

He spoke gravely, but his eyes were twinkling.

"Something of that sort."

I was as serious as he seemed to be and my eyes did not twinkle. He certainly had me thinking hard.

"My information was correct then. Would you care to take me far enough into your confidence to outline to me how you intend to bring about this moral regeneration of our public service?"

"Why should I?"

"There's no particular reason. I just thought I'd ask you. A pet theory of mine is that you never can tell what the answer will be until you ask the question. Sometimes people are communicative; sometimes they are not. It's all a part of the game."

"What game?"

"The greatest game in the world—politics."

Here was an opening. Hunkins was looking at me with his eyes half closed, studiously, as if he was classifying me.

"If you think politics is the greatest game in the world," I said, "why do you play it the way you do?"

I astonished myself. "That's a neat question," I thought.

"For that very reason. Have a smoke." He offered me an excellent cigarette, lighted one himself, and went on:

"However, if it shall be my good fortune to get better acquainted with you, as I hope to, we'll discuss that phase of it at length some time. Just now, we'll leave the ethical side of it apart and get down to practicalities. There is a vacancy in the Board of Aldermen from the Ward you live in."

"So I understand," and I began to feel myself in-

flating. Bill Hunkins, the boss, discussing politics with me! But why? It was beyond me.

"For which there is to be a special election three weeks from next Tuesday."

"Yes."

He sat up. His eyes were wide open now and looked straight into mine.

"How would you like to be our candidate?"

"Me?"

I never was so astonished in my life. And I began to deflate rapidly.

"Certainly. I can assure you that you will be nominated and elected if you will run. What do you think of it?"

At first, I couldn't think. My head was in a whirl. Then I began to get a glimmer of coherence. "Steady, old chap," I thought. "He's trying to tie you up with him so you can't do him any harm. It's a bribe and not much of a bribe at that."

"What do you think of it?"

"I don't know what to think of it. I never had any idea of going on the Board of Aldermen. I can't decide off hand."

"Well, consider it for a couple of days. The selection won't be made until Saturday. And let me make this suggestion: If you really want to go into politics this is a good chance. We all have to creep before we can walk, you know, and I can guarantee that as a member of that board you'll learn more about politics in a year than you will as an amateur uplifter outside in six. Think it over and let me know Saturday morning."

I was in a daze, trying to figure out just what it meant. Then I recalled what he said about asking questions, so I fired three at him:

"What's the object of this, Mr. Hunkins? What's back of this offer to me, a man you never met before and know little of? What's it all about?"

"Why, it's all about the Board of Aldermen, and politics, and your going into it, and various other correlated things that we haven't time to discuss to-night. I'll expect to hear from you Saturday, one way or the other."

He rose. We shook hands, and I went out, with my brain doing fifteen loop-the-loops a second. Me! An Alderman! By the grace of Bill Hunkins! Politics certainly moves in a mysterious way its wonders to perform.

CHAPTER VIII

ME—AN ALDERMAN!

I STAYED awake a long time trying to puzzle it out. "What is the psychology of it?" I asked myself. I am not much of a psychologist. Until I went in the Army I hadn't thought of the carking stuff since I left college, and I only thought about it enough there to get a "Fair" in the examination. In the Army I encountered busy flocks of psychologists, who were asking doughboys to work out problems like this: "If 5×2 is 37 put a cross in the square that is superimposed on the triangle that surrounds the smaller of sixteen circles, but if 2×5 is not 37 write another incorrect answer for the problem under the longer of these three words: black—white—green; and then state instantly whether the real reason why the chicken crosses the road is to get on the other side or because the road cannot cross the chicken, and verify your statement by spelling a word that contains the first letter of your last name and the last letter of your first name, and contains three labials and four dentals, which must not rhyme with mush, slush or flush."

That was psychology, they told us, and they made ratings of the soldiers on that basis, determining, to their own card-indexed satisfaction, whether the boys

should be kept continuously on kitchen police or sent to join the general staff. They were earnest about it, but they had only put about half of us through these important tests when the war quit on them, thus leaving posterity without the important knowledge as to whether a couple of million Jim Smiths and Charley Browns used fifty seconds, or five, in writing piffle on the dotted line if four plus two is nine, and the sun rises in the West, or putting six crosses over the prettiest letter in the alphabet provided the psychologists can hand Secretary Baker a stunt like this and get away with it.

That interested me in psychology. There must be something in it. To be sure, the man in my company who took half an hour to figure out whether nine minus nine is zero when it is high tide on the coast of Labrador, or eighteen at the full of the moon in Kokomo, got three citations and two medals for good work in killing Huns over in the Argonne, and brought in six prisoners one night single handed because when he ran onto them as he was alone he made them think he had a squad of companions just around the corner, but the tests showed him to be slow-witted and the veriest dub of a soldier. The psychologists said it only proved abnormality, or atavism, or an absonant quality, or something like that. I didn't quite get their explanation, but I am strong for psychology. It did give a lot of professors a good, safe method of serving their country in the great crisis.

"What is the psychology of Bill Hunkins' amazing proposition to me?" I approached that problem from a dozen different angles, and found no solution. As

I was in the midst of an elaborate hypothetical thesis I went to sleep, and next morning it occurred to me to talk the matter over with somebody who knows more about Hunkins than I do. Three persons presented themselves to me: Dad, Dowd and Steve Fox. I canvassed them thus: "If I go to Dad he'll laugh at me and tell me to forget it. I don't know Dowd well enough yet. Steve Fox is the man." I caught him at the office at two o'clock that afternoon.

"Steve," I said, "I've got a job."

"Politics or honest toil?"

"Politics."

"As soon as this? You're a pronto person. What is it?"

"Alderman."

"Alderman? What sort of an alderman?"

"Regular, honest-to-Mike alderman, from the Second Ward. Bill Hunkins offered it to me last night."

Steve looked hard at me. I know Steve so well that his mental processes are familiar to me. He was debating this question: Is he drunk, or crazy?

"Neither one," I said.

"Neither one? What the devil——"

"I'm not drunk, and I'm not crazy. It's a fact."

When Steve is perplexed he chews a wad of paper. He tore a piece from the margin of a newspaper, and chewed it vigorously.

"Let me get this straight. Bill Hunkins offered to make you Alderman from the Second Ward?"

"Yes."

"Where?"

"At his house."

"How did you get there?"

"He wrote to me and asked me to come."

"What did he say?"

"Nothing much. He's heard that I am talking of getting into politics, and he says I can learn more in the board in a year than anywhere else in six."

"That's right. What else?"

"Nothing. He says he'll guarantee nomination and election if I'll accept, and wants an answer by Saturday."

"Didn't he give you any reason?"

"Nope; only that."

Steve chewed his paper, and looked out of the window. "Well, I'll be gol-darned!" he said, finally. I waited for further illumination. Steve comes to bat regularly, but sometimes he is a bit slow in leaving the bench. When he is chewing paper in his mouth, he is chewing things over in his mind in the same vigorous fashion. Presently, he began:

"Bill Hunkins never does anything without a reason. He doesn't work on impulse. So, as I look at it, there are only two reasons for this thing. The first is because he thinks that, perhaps, you may get somewhere in this game you are talking about, with your father's money, and so on, and wants to tie you up. The second is that he needs a candidate from that ward who will be acceptable to the people who live there, and he has picked you because he has heard that you have political ideas, and may take it, not figuring that you will amount to anything in the way of opposition, at all, but planning on using you because you are respectable and have a good family name.

"I think the first reason is the real one, because there are plenty of others in the Second Ward he might pick up if respectability is all he is looking for. It isn't that. He has some returned-soldier stuff in his mind, and he knows how far the Talbot name goes in this city, and has decided to get you into his camp at once. This alderman thing is all he has for bait at present, so he's dangled that in front of your eyes. Did he say anything about future advancement?"

"No."

"Just made the bald proposal?"

"Yes, but he did say there are various reasons he has that can be talked over later."

"Just so. He's too foxy to make promises when he doesn't need to, for he has a strong habit of keeping his word. It will be time enough to talk about the future after you have fallen for this first advance; or maybe it never will be time—provided you do fall for it."

"Who said anything about falling for it?"

"I did. Come on up and see Tommie Dowd."

Dowd was in his office in the Occidental Building, talking to some young men in civilian clothes who were returned soldiers. Their clothes were too new, their bearings too erect, and their colors too brown to allow them to be anything else. Presently, the soldiers went out.

"This is a double and distinguished honor," Dowd said, "a great journalist, and a rising young politician call at my humble quarters. It must be something important."

"Not so important as it is interesting," Steve replied, "provided you will chop the kidding, and listen."

"Go ahead."

Steve told the story of my visit to Hunkins and what Hunkins offered to me in rapid fire fashion.

"What do you make out of that?" he asked, as he finished.

Dowd asked me a few questions, exactly like those Steve had asked me, and then said: "It's simple enough. Our friend Hunkins is planning to throw a monkey-wrench into our machinery."

"But George hasn't anything to do with your machinery—yet."

"I know it. However, in my opinion Hunkins is fooled, to some extent, by the stories brought in by his scouts. He's human, you know, and must depend on what his men tell him, to a large extent, subject to the clarifying processes of his own mind and experience. The most superserviceable person in the world is a political scout, next to a private detective. Both live, not by what they find out, but by what they say they find out. They have to get information to justify their employment, and if they get none, they make some, or if they get little they increase it in detail and importance. My judgment is that Hunkins thinks Talbot is further along than he is, and plans to tie him up, or, at least, to make a play at tying him up, to his end of it."

"Mine, too," said Steve.

"Poor bait," I commented.

"I don't know about that," Dowd objected. "An alderman is a rather important cog in the wheel of city government. The office is important even if the men

who fill it are not. What is your idea—to take it, or refuse it?”

“Refuse it.”

“Don’t be hasty. Let’s think this over a little. You came to me the other day with an idea about utilizing the returned soldiers for political purposes, both for the good of the city and for their own good. I told you some of us are working along those lines, and asked you to come to our next meeting, which is to-morrow night. What have you decided about that? Are you coming?”

“Yes.”

“And if we can show you any practicality of operation, and signs of progress are you inclined to join with us?”

“Yes; if you’ll let me.”

“Oh, we’ll let you. We need all the help we can get. Now, then, assuming that we can give you tangible evidence of work already accomplished, and expectations that look good, you will work with us. I already set you down as a partner in the enterprise because Steve, here, tells me you are all right, because I know your father, because you have some ideas in consonance with mine, and because, as I say, we need all the help we can get. You’re in.”

“Good.”

“That being the case, shall I tell you what I think you’d better do?”

“I wish you would.”

“Well, I’d take him up.”

Steve whistled. “Why?” he asked.

“For several reasons. The first is that the experi-

ence will be of value to Talbot. The second is because the position, and the news of it spread around will identify him with politics, and we need a man or two thus identified. The third is because both his personal history, and his name, will give him respect outside of the joshing of his social playmates, who do not count—respect of the average citizens, I mean. The fourth is because the newspapers will have to take it with some seriousness because of the Talbot name, as an evidence of an attempt to have better politics, unless Steve, here, gets facetious about it. The fifth is because there isn't a chance for a Pendergrast man up there, and there will be no campaign that will start anything. The sixth is because, in that position, Talbot can be of great value to us in what we shall try to do."

"Hold on!" I cried. "You don't think I'd take this job and double cross Hunkins, do you?"

"I do not, and I wouldn't advise you to take it if I did, or have any use for you whatsoever. What I mean is this: If Hunkins is sincere, or playing a deeper game than is apparent on the surface of this, he won't demand any obligation from you. He doesn't need your vote in the board. He's got that sewed up so tight with Tom Pendergrast's gang that anything you might try to do will be overwhelmed. If he is sincere, as I say, he won't ask any obligation. All right; then you can keep your eyes and ears open, and be of use to us, and yourself. If he is playing a deeper game than is apparent, we want to know that too, and the easiest way we can find that out is for you to accept, provided you are earnest and smart enough to play our game. Possibly you are. Steve says so. I'll take a chance."

"Direct spoken citizen, this," I thought, and was about to give an opinion when Dowd continued:

"I had no idea Brother Bill would weigh in this way, but he's a clever gentleman—a clever gentleman. If it is part of a big game, and not an ordinary political maneuver to get a respectable candidate, he'll not obligate you, at this time, either, for that would tip his hand. Feel like taking a whirl at it?"

"I don't know. Sometimes I do, and then I don't. There are a lot of angles to it that I haven't figured out yet."

"Oh, well, you've got until Saturday to decide. Perhaps I can get a better line on it for you before then. I'll try. Meantime, shall I see you to-morrow night?"

"Yes. I'm coming."

Steve and I walked down the street together. "No hurry," said Steve. "Tommie will dig up the inside of it if anybody knows it besides Hunkins. He's got a grapevine into that outfit."

I thought of talking to Dad about it that night, but didn't. Next morning, at breakfast, I said, casually as I could, although my heart was beating a little faster: "Dad, what would you think if I told you that I may run for that vacancy from our ward in the Board of Aldermen?"

Dad stopped buttering his cakes, and looked at me interestedly.

"I'd think of sending you to a sanitarium," but he smiled when he said it.

CHAPTER IX

STEVE FOX PRINTS IT

I DO not see the *News* until after Dad gets away. He had a row with the editor over a grade crossing at the pump works, and won't allow the paper in the house or at the office. I send for it after breakfast. The man brought a copy in and handed it to me, and an item jumped from the top of the second column on the first page and hit me a thundering whack. My eyes blinked, my face flamed, and my heart beat a tattoo as I read:

CAPTAIN GEORGE TALBOT MAY ENTER POLITICS

Son of Wealthy Manufacturer
Mentioned for Alderman

I didn't read what followed. That was enough. Steve Fox, my friend, just to get a measly little piece of news in his paper, had betrayed me! It was incomprehensible. It was outrageous. It was damnable. It was everything else putrid and perfidious I could think of. I raged up and down the room.

"Damn Steve Fox!" I shouted, "and damn every-

thing and everybody else more than an inch high! One of my best friends spills the beans for me this way. The man I trusted. I'll go down and punch him in the jaw. It's a lie. I haven't decided to run for Alderman. Probably I won't run, and he's made a laughing stock of me, and put me in foolish with everybody I know. I won't run for Alderman! I'll quit the whole outfit and go back to the pump business. The idea of springing this on me when I told him in confidence what happened. In confidence! Pshaw, he's just like the rest of his gang of reporters. Nothing sacred to them if they can get an item out of it. Ghouls, that's what they are. Worse than that. They're—they're——"

I had to quit, for I couldn't think of anything worse than a ghoul. I rang up the *News*. Nobody there but an office boy who told me, fliply, what I knew, that Fox wouldn't be down until noon. I thought about calling the editor at his house and protesting to him, but I didn't.

"I'll get Fox first," I thought. "I'll just walk in and pound the eternal upholstery out of him. I'll——"

Then the telephone rang. It was Dad. "They tell me there's a piece about your running for Alderman in the *News* this morning, George."

"Yes, sir, but I didn't——"

"All right. Drop in and see me when you come down. Good-by."

Dad wasn't so very ferocious. Still, Dad thinks everything printed in the *News* is a fake. So that means nothing. When he finds there is some truth

back of it—oh, boy! I shivered over that, and then it occurred to me to read the item, and find out just what depths of perfidy Steve Fox plunged himself. I read it.

"There was a story in circulation at the City Hall yesterday that Captain George Talbot, son of John J. Talbot, president of the Talbot Pump and Engine Company, intends to enter politics, and will run for Alderman from the Second Ward at the coming election to fill the vacancy caused by the death of Alderman Octavius K. Porter.

"The story was that Boss William Hunkins has offered the nomination to Talbot, and that Talbot is considering it. Decision will be made on Saturday. Neither Talbot nor Hunkins could be found last night.

"Captain Talbot is twenty-nine years old. He was in the Army, saw active service in France, and won a promotion in the Argonne. He was in business with his father after he finished college until he went to war, and is a member of the Union, the University, the Country and the Weehawis clubs."

I read it twice and did not cool down much during the readings. It was a scandal and a shame that Steve Fox should do a thing like that to me when the chances are ten to one against my taking the nomination. I shuddered to think of the reception I would get at the Union Club, and at the Country Club. Then, while I was shuddering, the telephone rang again. Dowd called.

"Hello, Talbot. Seen the *News* this morning?"

"Yes. I've seen the *News*, and it's a perfect damned outrage that Steve Fox should do a thing like that—

why—I haven't—I—I never said—I'll be kidded all over the place—it's——"

I sputtered like a wet fuse.

"Cheer up!" advised Dowd. "It isn't as bad as you think. Come down here, if you have time, and we'll talk it over."

I ran out to the garage, took the runabout, and broke every traffic regulation in my haste to get to the Occidental Building. When I got into Dowd's office I found him placidly smoking a big cigar, and reading the *News*.

"Do you know anything about this?" I shouted at him.

"Meaning that item about you in the paper, I suppose? Sit down, won't you? I tell you it isn't as bad as you think."

"The hell it isn't!"

"Certainly not. Have a smoke?"

"No."

"All right. I don't blame you. They're not very good, but they're the best at hand at the moment. Now, then——"

I was sitting on the edge of a chair, and was just about ready to make a leap at him, when he laughed:

"Pretty sore, aren't you?" he asked. "But don't start hostilities until I give you our side of it."

"Who's 'our'?"

"Steve Fox and myself."

"So you were in on it, too?"

"Yes; of course. It's my idea."

That made me boil over. I half rose from the chair. "Your idea!" I shouted. "Where do you get

off having ideas like that about me? And why didn't you ask me about it?"

"It was late when we got together. We didn't put it up to you because we knew it would start a long argument, and it had to be done at once, or not at all. We took a chance on being able to show you to-day that it's the right play."

"You've got some showing to do," I said truculently. "You can't get away with a thing like this without making good, and making good right now. Go ahead."

"I will, if you will give me a chance. Now, listen: Bill Hunkins sent for you and offered to make you an alderman. You are half inclined to accept. Steve and I think it will be a good thing. I told you yesterday that there were but two reasons why Hunkins made this offer to you. One is because he wants to use you in some game he has in mind. The other is because he wants a respectable candidate and picks you as filling the bill. I gave you several reasons why it might be of help to what we have in mind if you accepted. They were good reasons."

"But you had no business printing this before I definitely decided."

"Oh, yes we had, and have. We have two mighty good reasons. The first is that this item, which does not say you are going to run, but that it is reported you are considering the proposition, leaves it wide open for you. Also, it gives you a chance to find out what the comeback will be from your family, from your friends, and from the public generally before you are committed. If you can't stand the gaff you needn't run.

All you have to do is to deny the story, and Steve will print the denial, and it is all over. Only, keep out of the way of the reporters for the afternoon papers to-day.

"The second reason is the real one. Printing that item puts it squarely up to Hunkins. You can go to him now and say to him: 'Hunkins, if I accept this nomination it must be understood that I accept it without any obligations actual or implied, without any strings on me, without any promises to act other than independently in every way.' If Hunkins agrees, you will be in a position to help us a lot. If Hunkins doesn't agree, and tries to tie you down to any promises, you can tell him to go to hell, and issue a denial of the story which will give as the reason for your rejection of the offer the fact that Hunkins wants you to pledge your immortal soul to him as a return for the job. That will jolt Brother Hunkins, establish you as a high-minded and independent young citizen, and secure you considerable applause from the proletariat. Get me?"

"But suppose I don't want to go that far?"

"Then a flat denial will do the business. You will have had your name on the front page of the *News*, with a brief but complimentary sketch of your career, and nobody will be hurt. Steve will print anything you want to say."

He had me thinking. Also, I was getting back to normal in temperature. "Suppose Hunkins agrees to my proposition?" I said. "He'll never say so to anybody but me."

"Well, you can talk, can't you? All you've got to

do, if you accept this place, is to make a statement that you take it absolutely unpledged and with no obligations to any person but yourself. That will fix that."

"Will Hunkins stand for that?"

"He'll have to, or you won't run. If he wants you as badly as I think he does, he'll stand. If it is only a case of making a front with you he'll tell you good night."

"Look here, Dowd," I said, after considering a minute, "you seem to take it for granted that I will accept this nomination."

"You will if Steve and I can urge you into it."

"Why?"

"Because there's a great field opening up before us here in this city, and we need representatives, men who can stand out in front as rallying points for our organization. Those men must be known, and they will be of greater use if they are politically known. I admit that alderman isn't much, but it is something. Besides, we elect a mayor next year."

"What do you mean by that?"

"It may mean something, or it may not. Maskee on that, as the Chinese say. The point is, just now: Are you going to accept or not?"

"I'll tell you to-night."

"All right. Meantime, if I were you I'd drop in at the club at luncheon time, and see how many harpoons you get from that gang of expert harpooners."

Dowd mollified me somewhat, but not entirely. When I left his office I still felt hurt, indignant and more or less outraged, but as I slid along in the run-about the thing began to clarify for me like this:

"Dowd and Steve know more about politics than I do. Perhaps they are right. Anyhow, I've got to take somebody's judgment to help me over the first steps of this game, and Dowd makes me feel he's honest in what he says. Really, there isn't much harm done, even if I don't accept, for all there will be to it will be some joshing, and if I can't josh back with the gang I deserve all I get and more, too."

I drove out into the country, both because I didn't want to see Dad too early, being apprehensive about Dad, and because of Dowd's advice about keeping away from the reporters for the afternoon papers. No matter if he did throw me down this way, Steve Fox is best to be my journalistic impresario at present.

It was a quarter to one when I got back to the Talbot Building. Dad let me in at once.

"How about this article in the *News*?" he asked, as soon as I closed the door.

"I didn't authorize it."

"Is it true?"

"Yes and no."

"How far has it got?"

"I've talked to Hunkins."

"Anybody else?"

"Steve Fox and a man named Dowd."

"Thomas J. Dowd, the lawyer?"

"Yes, sir."

"What does Dowd say?"

"He's for it."

"Why?"

"Says it will be a good thing to help along my part

in the organization of the soldiers. He's working on that."

"Are you going in with him?"

"I hope to."

"Hum." Dad pulled his eyebrow and I waited for results. "Ever meet Hunkins before?" he asked.

"No, sir."

"Any strings to the offer?"

"No, sir, and there won't be if I take it."

"Thinking of taking it, are you?"

"I might."

Then something inside me burst. "Look here, Dad," I said. "What is there so reprehensible about going into politics if a man goes in on a clean and decent basis? How the devil are we going to get better conditions if some of us don't do the work? Where do we get off sitting around here and grouching all the time and doing nothing else? Isn't there some way of playing this game out in the open, and getting results that way?"

Dad looked out of the window. My cue was silence.

Presently, he turned and said: "There may be some way of playing it out in the open, but I've had bad luck in finding it. Twenty years ago I crusaded against the same sort of conditions that exist now, and was laughed at for my fights. I had a lot of conversational sympathy from the element that should have been fighting with me, but when it came down to the real, hard rough and tumble they were too busy, or too refined, or had some other reason. I am proud of this city. I want it to be well run. I want it to be clean and progressive in the matter of public works and govern-

ment. I want it to have fine schoolhouses and libraries, and hospitals, and other institutions. I fought for these things. I had little support.

"Let me tell you one thing, son: When there's municipal grafting being done, all the grafters are not the political grafters. The business men get their share, or some of them, and, usually, the biggest ones. That's why it always is so hard to stir a business community into action in a political way. It will cost them something. I fought hard. I was beaten. Then I quit, and tried other tactics."

"What tactics, Dad?"

"No matter. Meantime, I'm beginning to think you are in earnest in this business. Are you?"

"I am, Dad."

"Well, you're hanging to it like a puppy to a root, anyhow. Rather a surprise to me. I haven't noticed much interest before this in anything but the latest dance step."

"The Army changed that."

"Glad to know it. When have you got to decide?"

"To-morrow morning."

"What's your idea?"

"I feel like taking it."

His attitude changed. Until then we talked on the basis of man to man. Dad threw the conversation into the father-and-son gear.

"Is that all?" he asked, sort of contemptuously. "Milk-and-watery about it, eh? Can't make up your mind? Lack of decision, and all that sort of thing? Army didn't change that phase of you much."

Gee! That man can be disagreeable when he sets

about it. He was trying for a rise out of me, and he got one.

"Yes, I can make up my mind," I flared. "I'm going to take it."

Dad smiled. "Keep your shirt on," he said, "and when I've signed these letters we'll go and have some lunch. Where shall it be?"

"I was thinking about the club. Might as well face it there now as any other time."

"Good idea! We'll go over there and face it together."

CHAPTER X

I MEET MISS CRAWFORD

HEY, Georgel" Fred Daskin' shouted across the smoking room of the club as Dad and I entered, "I see you took that tip I gave you the other day."

"What tip?"

"What tip? Listen at him! Why, I called you up on the phone and told you to run for alderman in our ward, and I see by the *News* this morning that you're going to do it. I guess I'm bad as a political dopester, eh, what? Grand little successor to the late and unlamented Octavius K. you'll be, too."

Fred went out to the middle of the crowded room, and stuck his hand in the bosom of his coat. He's our best amateur actor.

"Gentlemen of the Board," he declaimed, "I feel that I scarcely need say that in rising on this important occasion I have none but the best interests of my constituents at heart. I am now about to relate an instance that is fraught with great importance to this fair city of ours, than whom none is prouder of which than I. As I was taking my matutinal stroll I chanced to stay my progress adjacent to the magnificent public library——"

"Library!" squeaked Peter McWhirter, struggling

to his feet from his big chair, "I know a good one about a library. It seems——"

The shout of laughter stopped Daskin, and Dad and I went up to the dining room. They are a little afraid of Dad in that club, for he has a way of talking straight, and not many of them bothered us. Some bolder cut-ups did come over and ask me if I am a henchman of Hunkins or Pendergrast, to let them in on the graft, and similar stuff; but it was much easier to take because Dad was there. As we were drinking our coffee Mr. Perkins sidled across the room.

"George," he said, "let me congratulate you, if congratulations are in order. I mean, if the report in the paper is true. I consider it a fine thing for a young man like you to enter the civic administration. We need safe and sane men in this crisis."

"You sure do," I thought, remembering what he said at the bank meeting, but I thanked him politely, and, presently, Dad and I went out.

"The trouble with most of that crowd," said Dad, "is that they think their standing in the community depends on the size of the flock of automobiles they own, and that they have fulfilled all their civic obligations and advanced to leading citizenship when they can afford to import a car. They are suffering from moneyitis, which has two phases: Have got and haven't got. The have-gotters devote all their efforts to spending it ostentatiously, and the haven't-gotters use every moment trying to get it and proclaiming they really have it. They don't amount to a hoot as citizens—not a hoot. Don't bother about them."

Dad said nothing more about politics, and we part-

ed at the entrance to the Talbot Building. I went off to find Steve Fox. I ran him down in the City Hall.

"Kamerad!" he shouted when he saw me, throwing up his hands and grinning at me.

"What did you do it for?" I demanded.

"Have you seen Dowd?"

"Yes."

"Then you know. Raised merry hell around here," he continued, jubilantly. "All the gang are trying to get hold of Hunkins to find out what it means, and Hunkins isn't to be found. They're sore as crabs, for they thought they had it fixed to slip Martin Ten Eyck into the place, Martin being a good, consistent performer who splits with reasonable honesty. Going to it?"

"I think I shall, if this hasn't queered it with Hunkins."

"It won't, not if he wants you. Pretty good sign it hasn't, his keeping under cover. I know that bird. He'll be waiting for you on the doorstep to-morrow. Keep away from that afternoon paper bunch. I'm your authorized press agent. So long."

I went to a matinee, and stayed until the afternoon papers were on the streets. They had nothing but paragraphs rewritten from the *News*. It was just eight o'clock when I reached Room 48, Tucker Building. There was no sign on the door, but a light shone through the glass, not only of that door, but of the doors of two adjoining rooms down the hall.

I knocked and entered. Five people were there, four men and one woman. I knew three of the men, Dowd, Steve Fox, and a Major Pickard, who

crossed on the same transport with me. Dowd introduced the woman to me as Miss Esther Crawford, and the other man as Colonel Anderson. Presently, three other men and two women came in. These were Mrs. Ainsley, Miss Harrow, Sergeant Place, Major Caruthers, and Sergeant Ralston. "All interested in our plan," Dowd said.

The most conspicuous thing about the furnishings of Room 48 was a big map of the city that hung on the wall, with the boundaries of the nineteen wards heavily marked in black lines. There were sets of figures in red within each ward enclosure, and various other notations I couldn't make out. Two flat-topped desks, two typewriter tables with machines on them and a row of filing cases made up the rest of the furniture, aside from the chairs. The door leading to the next room was open, and I heard typewriters clicking. It looked business-like. Dowd and Miss Crawford were going over some papers, and the rest talked casually.

I knew there would be a woman's end of it. Women are as important as men, maybe more so, because every soldier who goes into an organization that has for one of its objects the use of the vote, probably has, within the circle of his immediate relationship, at least one woman who has as many votes as he has—one. Moreover, the women of our city, like the women of every other place in the United States, were active in all sorts of war work, and some of them developed into great organizers, and executives. Undoubtedly, these women were of that type. Dowd would see to that.

I looked these women over. Impressionistically, Mrs. Ainsley has the appearance of one of those women who has a horror of getting fat, and is likely to, while Miss Harrow doesn't give a whoop how thin she is. She is rather thin. Mrs. Ainsley is a carefully gowned combination of curves, and Miss Harrow a severely tailored assortment of angles. Shoes are a sure indication of femininity, or the absence of it. Mrs. Ainsley's shoes are thirty-dollars-a-pair confections, and Miss Harrow's might have been made by a boot-maker, neat, but bootey. Proceeding to the other extreme, Mrs. Ainsley's hair is the triumphant concoction of a skillful hair-dresser, and Miss Harrow's a wad wadded by an impatient woman who thinks hair a nuisance. Mrs. Ainsley's hat exudes expensiveness and exclusiveness, and Miss Harrow's is a stiff brimmed dark straw that proclaims masculinity.

I had not reached Miss Crawford in my casual cataloguing of the women when Dowd said: "I think all are here who are coming, and I suggest that Miss Crawford shall read some letters she has received."

Miss Crawford took up several sheets of paper, moved over to the light, and began to read letters from persons who politely regretted their inability to be at that meeting, and said they are too busy, or too something else to join in the work, or from other persons who also politely regretted their inability to be there, but displayed interest, and promised to come next time. The light fell strongly upon her as she read, and I had an excellent opportunity for a detailed look at her. She was entirely at ease, read the letters in a clear, pleasant voice, and made some comment

on each one, in way of identification and description of the writer. I tried to listen, but the reader distracted my attention from what she read. So I concluded that the letters could be taken up later. Meantime, as to Miss Crawford.

I know it is banal, but all I could think of, taking Miss Crawford as a whole, is that she is a "well set-up" woman, with a good, round figure—not fat, nor ever going to be, but with solid flesh. "I'll bet she'll weigh twenty pounds more than one would naturally expect," I thought. She has one of those complexions that a bright light helps, instead of hinders—rosy because of the healthy red blood that is just under the smooth skin of the cheeks—rosy but not ruddy, and with the rosiness of it diminishing to an alluring pink at the temples, the tips of the ears, and the firm and rounded chin. I remember once, in a discussion of her always interesting but often inconclusive sex, with Jimmie Chambers he described just such a woman as his idea of what all women should be, saying: "If I ever find one I think I'll eat her with cream and sugar, for she'll have the combined flavor of blackberries and loganberries—a real flavor, not the mere sweetness of the blonde and blue-eyed peaches and cream type."

Miss Crawford's eyes, I noted, are gray and hair a dark brown, almost black. She has a lot of hair, and it is neither so scrupulously elegant as Mrs. Ainsley's, nor so carelessly inelegant as Miss Harrow's in its manifestations, but piled up becomingly. Her eyelashes are dark, and as she looked down at her letters, standing there in the glare of the light, I could see they are long. Her eyebrows are dark, also, and

her teeth, even, substantial and gleamingly white by contrast to her full, red lips.

She wore a blue, tailored suit that hit me as being about as nifty a thing in the dress line as I've seen lately, and looked as womanly as Miss Harrow's coat and trousers—excuse me, skirt—looked masculine, and, at that, didn't give the impression of extreme fashion. Her waist was a soft, white stuff, and I could see her healthy, solid flesh glowing pinkly through it and through the opening at the neck. Her hands are plump and white, with but one ring, rather heavy, of an odd shape, on the little finger of her left hand, with a brilliant opal in it. "No superstition about her," I thought, "a sensible sort of a person, no doubt." Her wrist watch wasn't one of those bejeweled ostentations that many women wear, but a substantial affair that looked as if one might catch a train by it. "Keeps her appointments, I'll bet," I voted to myself. Her shoes were of brown leather, without fancy tops, and stood exactly in the same relation to the shoes of the other women as her suit did to the ultra costume of the one and the ulterior costume of the other.

"Can't call her a beauty," I summed up. "Her face is entirely too intelligent for that. But she's darned easy to look at, just the same, and by the way she handles herself I take it that she knows where she is at every second."

I was hazy about what she had read when she finished, for I had only assimilated snatches of it all, but I had assimilated a good deal of her, and was ready to approve of all she set forth.

"There are some here," said Dowd, "who are here

for the first time. In order that our objects may be clear, and what is done thus far understood I will outline our work as briefly as possible. I take it that all of us are convinced that these four million men who went into the army and navy are, because of their experiences and what they learned in active service, coming back to civil life with a rather enlarged horizon, and with a wider appreciation of their own latent powers as citizens. Not all of them, perhaps, but a good many of them. They have learned the value of organization. They have been told that they saved the world. They believe it, but they do not get much beyond that bald acceptance of the fact, because the heroics of it, as put to them, have obscured what it heralds so far as our country is concerned.

"They mostly think, vaguely, perhaps, but concretely enough to supply a basis for development, that they can capitalize in civil life the knowledge of organization and the comradeship, the power of united purpose that the war unfolded to them, certainly to their own good, and possibly to the good of the country and the communities in which they live. So do we. Naturally, the best and most practical way in which this raw material may be used is by welding it into an organization that shall have for its purpose these very things: Help for the soldier, and help for the community. Furthermore, the most effective manner in which an organization may be used is in politics.

"Now, these boys, largely, know little about politics. A certain proportion of them are familiar enough with our politics—a certain small proportion—to know that the soldier has been a most potent force in it for

fifty years, but the historical aspect of it is not the main aspect. Whether they know what has happened or not, they are of the opinion that they, as returned soldiers and heroes, can make things happen, and all they need is for some one to show them how. That is what we shall try to do.

"To that end, a few of us have begun operations here, working on the theory that the political side of the matter may well be kept somewhat in the background for a time, and the social and comradely side of it developed, or to put it more plainly, that the benefits of after-the-war coöperation and organization shall be set forth, at first, in general terms, and not specifically as having political trends. Thus, we are emphasizing the human association side of it, the keeping-together side, the advantages of solidarity and continued association, pointing out, rather in the way of possibility than promise, that a great deal of good, in many ways, may come out of such organization. We have established a little bureau for looking after jobs for them, for helping them in their every-day problems, for straightening out their insurance and other puzzles, for pushing things along for them, and, in fine, big-brothering them—they are mostly boys, as yet—all down the line. Once we get them together that way, it will not be hard to show them how they may be of power politically.

"There are various contemplated national organizations of these boys, and some of them have organizers here, but we are keeping clear of those. We tell them to wait and see what happens, pointing out that the first post of the G. A. R. wasn't organized until

a year after the Civil War ended. What we are trying to do is to combine our local material into an organization that shall operate locally, first off, and that may be swung into the best state and national organization that is evolved."

Dowd then went into details, telling us that the plan is to organize a central committee that is to have supervisory charge of all the work, and to supplement with ward and precinct committees for detailed application to localities. The precinct committees will report to the ward committees, and the ward committees to the central committee. As soon as practicable there will be ward headquarters, which will be meeting places for the soldiers and their women folks, and will be made as attractive as funds will allow. These committees will be made up of men and women, equally represented, and will, so far as possible, have soldier membership, to give them the personal interest, and membership of women who were active in war work in the ward, or who are popular with the boys of the different localities. They will be as democratic as the army was. "In fact," Dowd said, "we want more privates and non-coms on the committees than officers. That is essential. Three of us here to-night were sergeants. I have two corporals in mind who will be asked to go on the central committee. The idea of rank will be rigidly excluded. We must all be on a common basis of comradeship."

He then asked Miss Crawford to explain the detail, telling us that Miss Crawford was secretary to Governor Plunkett, whose term expired in 1916, and that she remained at the state capital until the war

ended as the head of the organization section of the State Council of Defense.

"The first essential," she said, "is to secure all the information that we can concerning the individual soldiers and sailors who went from this city to the war, whether as volunteers, as national guardsmen, in the draft or as sailors. That is not so difficult as it seems, for the tabulations of the State Council of Defense are available, and we are securing a fairly complete list from the files of the newspapers when the drafts were made and the calls printed in Washington. It is not complete yet, and the work of checking up the names, and eliminating those who were killed or died of disease is necessarily slow. Furthermore, not all our contingent is home yet, and some of them will not be home for several months.

"In round numbers, exclusive of officers, between ten and eleven thousand men went into the army and navy from this city. I should say that our losses were not more than five hundred, so we may figure on a potential strength of ten thousand. Of course, we shall not get all of these, because many of them will not join, some will go to other cities, and for other reasons. If we get eight thousand we shall do well. In addition to these there are eight or ten thousand women, possibly more, who may be considered as material for co-related action. Thus, if we succeed as we hope to, we shall have, say, sixteen thousand members, or thereabouts in the course of a year. The civilian vote in the gubernatorial campaign of 1918, in this county, was, roundly, 75,000 of which the Republicans had a plurality of 14,000. The city cast 60,000 of

those votes, and, allowing for the same percentage of Republicanism here, which is practically maintained, that means there are about 40,000 Republicans and 20,000 Democrats, including the women.

"Undoubtedly, the soldiers and sailors will divide in their political preferences in about this proportion, for our politics, in this country, is largely a matter of inheritance. That is, men are Republicans, or Democrats, because their fathers are, mostly. I suppose, now that the women have the vote, the first generation of us will get our political affiliations from our fathers, or other men folks, too, but, presently, no doubt the girls will be somewhat influenced by their mothers. Maybe not, but that isn't important.

"The point is that to get effective and concerted political action from these men—I am now speaking entirely of the political phases of this work—there must be an additional incentive other than the usual party issues of policies. If that were the case they would separate along their original preferential lines. We purpose to supply that additional incentive for solidarity of action with our organization of the soldiers and sailors for their mutual benefit and help and combined power—to add the great element of self-interest. If we can do that, and can control our 16,000 votes we can accomplish almost anything we want in this city, for that block of votes, thrown either way, will turn the scale, and will, also, demand and receive adequate consideration from the old party chiefs. Indeed, we can get anything from mayor down, and nobody can hinder us."

I never heard a woman talk like that before. I

never knew a woman who knew as much about politics as I do, and I don't know much. Here is one, I thought, who not only knows more about politics than I do, but more than most of the men I know. The women of my acquaintance who talk any politics at all, talk sketchily, and are for suffrage because it helps them to get their pictures in the papers, or are against it for the same reason. This woman knows details, figures, situations, and has a clear grasp of what can be done. "Jimminy!" I thought, "if I am going to associate with her in this work I'd better find out a few things or she'll make me look like a duffer if I talk to her."

Miss Crawford then told us of her office organization, her clerks, letter-writing, circularization, literature and so on. "It's a mere case of salesmanship," she said, "to use an overworked term. We have something we want to get to these boys and their women folk and we are using modern methods for accomplishing that end. Our preliminary campaign is about over. The work of ward organization will soon begin. We have already set up the nucleus of these ward committees, and as the boys come back we'll find them and pledge them so far as we are able. Shall I show you our plant?"

She took us into the other rooms, where there were many filing cases holding cards, duplicating machines, typewriters—all the paraphernalia for propaganda, organization and publicity. Several clerks were at work in the other room. When we reached the third she said, "This is Mr. Fox's office."

"What do you do, Steve?" I asked.

"Oh," he said, "I'm press agent, and write the circulars."

"And you, Dowd?"

"I'm sort of self-appointed chairman until we get our central committee organized."

"And you, Miss Crawford?"

"I'm general inside manager, secretary, and so on."

Then Sergeant Ralston voiced a thought that was in my mind, and probably in the minds of some of the others.

"Where's the money coming from to run all this?"

"We haven't spent much as yet," Dowd answered. "Most of us work for nothing. Mrs. Ainsley and Miss Harrow have helped generously, and some others. There will be a ways and means committee presently. We can get the money. That isn't the problem. The problem is to get the boys."

CHAPTER XI

I HEAR SOME THINGS

STICK around until after these people go," Dowd said to me. "I want you to get better acquainted with Miss Crawford, and there's that aldermanic business, too."

It was decided to hold the meeting for the organization of the central committee on the following Friday, and those present went out after offering their comment and suggestion, leaving Dowd, Steve, Miss Crawford and myself in the room.

"What's the decision?" asked Dowd.

"I'm going to take it."

"Good work! Hear anything more from Hunkins?"

"Not a thing."

"How did you get by at the club and with your father?"

"Dad seemed non-committal, although I sort of felt at the end of our conversation that he prodded me into saying that I'll take it. Anyhow, he went over to the club with me, and the comedians there didn't have much chance with him along. There was some joshing, but not a great deal. Did you find out anything?"

"No, I didn't. My grapevine into the Hunkins

outfit didn't work this time. The regulars are sore over the story, but Hunkins isn't saying a word one way or the other, and I can't tap him direct. You'll see him in the morning?"

"Yes."

"Let us know how you come out. I'll be at my office all day."

"And, say, George," put in Steve, "you sew it up until after dinner, will you, so I can give your upper circles another laugh of scorn with their breakfasts. I don't want to be beaten on my own story, you know."

Steve went off to his office, and Miss Crawford walked up the street with Dowd and myself. I observed that she has a ready and happy sort of a smile, and that when she took time to appraise me, as she did after the others had left, she seemed to be making a mental card index of me for her own use, classifying and identifying me—pigeonholing me for future reference. She asked me a few questions about myself, listened with an impersonal air of interest as I recited my scant Iliad, and turned to other things. "Gee!" I thought, "I suppose she reads character at sight and all that sort of thing," and I bewailed my neglected opportunities to get equipment for treating her in the same manner. It was only a week ago I was reading an advertisement how one can become an intellectual giant in this way for five dollars.

"What do you think is the mental attitude of those boys towards all this thing?" I asked her. "I mean, what did they get out of the war?"

"Why," she said, "I believe that the mental attitude of the great majority of those who went to war

is comparable, to a certain degree, to the mental attitude of most of the women of this country, so far as its awakenings are concerned. Now laugh."

She turned and looked at me with a healthy, red-checked sort of a defiance. Dowd did the laughing. "It's a pretty complex situation that you can't find a female analogy for," he said.

"Complex?" she retorted. "Not at all. A complex situation necessarily is feminine. It is the simple, obvious male things that make comparisons difficult, and males are so obvious, you know, in all their relations towards the world and those who dwell thereupon."

"Do you think so?" I asked, trying to probe into this wholesale aspersion on my superior sex.

"Certainly; don't you? At any rate, we have entered into an era where we women will have a chance to prove it."

"More power to you," said Dowd. "We men have made such an infernal mess of running the world that I, for one, am quite ready to stand aside and allow you women to take a shot at it. Only, you must not shirk your responsibilities."

"We shan't shirk them half as much as you men did, you may be sure of that. Responsibilities are merely matters of detail and most women gloat over detail."

"And themselves," added Dowd, wickedly.

"Certainly," she replied. "A woman's mind instinctively turns to that which is good, and beautiful and true."

"That will hold you for a while," I said to Dowd.

"It will," he chuckled. "I'll quit. But you haven't

finished answering Talbot's question, Miss Crawford."

"What I mean is this," she said. "It seems to me that the women of this country, and of every other country, for that matter, have gone through the same evolution the men have, in their own way, and in a large percentage of the total that way is not far removed from the exact manner the man mind thought out the matter, or is thinking it out, especially the man-soldier mind. The woman of our country, with some notable exceptions—the woman in the mass, I mean—is comparable, in her awakening and her manner of thought after that awakening, to these boys who went to war. The soldiers had little thought of anything but their immediate concerns, being youthful, and the women, until lately, had but little thought of anything but their immediate concerns, being 'sheltered.' How I loathe that word!

"She hasn't lost her femininity, except in the cases of a certain number of up-to-date Mary Walkers and crusaders, but she has been jolted into thinking, by circumstances, just as the soldiers were jolted into thinking by their actual contact with war and the war machinery. Also, to utilize Mr. Dowd's characterization of us, a woman's chief concern is herself. We are essentially selfish, and introspective, and concrete. We do not appreciate, as a sex, an abstract proposition. Hence, the selfish interest most women had in this war, the husband, or son, or brother, or relative end of it set her mind at work. No matter what it was that started her mind to working, she has learned that there are boundaries and mandatories, and Leagues of Nations, and Balkan States, and a dismembered Poland

"Holy smoke, Dowd!" I said. "This paragon powders her nose."

"Sure, and she does every other feminine thing, too. Don't get it into your head that she is any Sexless Susan or Militant Maria. She's a real woman."

"Does she dance?"

"Dance? Ask her. She's got Mrs. Castle or that Walton girl beaten a block."

I began to see a light, dimly. Here is a new sort of a woman so far as I am concerned. My interest increased.

"Who are the other women?" I asked.

"Don't get off wrong about them, either," said Dowd. "Because Mrs. Ainsley looks like a cream puff it isn't any sign she is one. She's rich, and likes to spend money dolling herself up, but she's got a lot of brains, and an active, sympathetic, practical interest in a good many things that are worth while. So has Miss Harrow. She was at the head of the local branch of the National League for Woman's Service, and did a lot of important work in Washington, too."

I listened, and was instructed, but my mind rested on Miss Crawford. "How old is she?" I asked.

"Oh, about fifty."

"Get out! She can't be!"

"Who are you talking about? Miss Harrow?"

"No. Miss Crawford."

"Oh! Why, I guess Miss Crawford is twenty-eight or twenty-nine, or thirty, maybe. How the devil do I know? Twenty-eight, for a guess."

Just then Miss Crawford appeared, and we got a table, and ordered some supper. There is a dancing

floor in the Schoolcraft rose room, and a good band. I asked her to dance, when the band began, and she said she'd like to. I hadn't gone once the length of the floor with her until I realized that Dowd is right. She can dance. We had another, and she danced with Dowd once. I'd have stayed until the lights went out, but she suggested going, and we got a taxi-cab, and took her home. She lives on Touschard Avenue, I discovered, with the Pettingills. Professor Pettingill is our most distinguished economist. He wrote a book on Practical Economics that weighs four pounds.

"Where did you learn so much about politics, Miss Crawford?" I asked after the taxi began rattling to its destination.

"Why, I have been in politics all my life. My father was a state senator for several terms and I lived at the capital with him, and after that he went to Congress for six years, and I lived in Washington. I began to absorb politics when I was a little girl and have been interested in it ever since. Father died when I was twenty and I struck out for myself. I had been a sort of a secretary for him between school terms in Washington, and had learned typewriting and stenography. I took some special studies at Bryn Mawr, and then Governor Plunkett offered me a position with him. I stayed there until his term was ended, in January, 1916, and after that went with the State Council for Defense. When the war ended I came here, because I have many friends here, and Mr. Dowd found me, or I found Mr. Dowd. Anyhow, I am much interested in this work, and that's all there is to tell."

"Isn't she a corker?" asked Dowd, as she ran up the steps of the Pettingill house.

"She sure is!" I replied with a fervor that made Dowd turn and regard me interestedly.

CHAPTER XII

I ACCEPT THE NOMINATION

GOING to see Hunkins to-day?" Dad asked me at breakfast.

Yes, sir."

"What's your decision?"

"I'll take it, if he doesn't make any conditions, or try to tie me up with promises."

"It will seem odd to have you in the board. I'm taking it for granted you will be elected. Know any of your future colleagues?"

"I was on a committee from the Country Club once that had a meeting with Pendergrast about a water extension we wanted."

"How did he strike you?"

"I don't remember much about him."

"Well, you'll know plenty a year from now. I've fussed with that outfit, off and on, for a good many years. However, there's no need of my delineating those statesmen for you. You'll have a chance to find them out first hand. What do you think of Hunkins?"

"He isn't much like my idea of a political boss."

"Queer fish, Hunkins. Worth watching. Well, I've got an appointment at nine-thirty." Dad rose and started to leave.

"Wait a minute, Dad," I said. "What do you think about it? Is it a good thing to do, or not?"

"That all depends on you, son. You can be useful, or not, as you choose. You are going into an atmosphere of small politics, and of the most practical kind. It may be a good starting point, or it may not. That is up to you. Certainly, there is plenty of opportunity, and a big enough future. Good luck!"

It seemed to me that Dad is rather evasive. However, as he says, it is up to me. I read the *News* until ten o'clock. There was nothing in it that concerned me, except a brief paragraph that the candidates for the vacancies in the board are to be selected to-day. At ten o'clock I called Hunkins on the telephone.

"Good morning, Mr. Hunkins. This is Talbot speaking."

"Good morning, Captain. Are you coming over to see me?"

"Whenever it is convenient."

"Please come at noon, if that will suit you. I shall be busy until that time."

Noon suited me, and I was at No. 76 Martin Street at twelve, exactly. The same maid showed me into the room that was lined with the red and yellow and brown and green books. A few minutes later I heard the outer door close, and Hunkins appeared.

"Good morning again, Captain," he said. "Will you come into my private retreat?"

I followed him to the inner room, and sat down in the solitary chair at the end of the desk. I was nervously apprehensive over the meeting. It marked a new and strange step for me. Hunkins was smiling

and affable. He lighted a cigarette, fussed with some papers on his desk, as if giving me a chance to get settled into the environment, and then turned and asked:

"Well, Captain, have you made a decision?"

"I have, but there are a few things I want to talk over with you before I tell you what it is."

"All right. For instance?" He sat down in his chair, leaned back and looked at me attentively.

"You realize that this is rather a sensational thing for me to consider."

"Sensational? What is sensational about a young man of your standing and character going into politics, and taking a place in the Board of Aldermen?"

"That's just it. You know the Board of Aldermen doesn't stand very high in this city, isn't respectable——"

"All the greater virtue then in our endeavor to inject some respectability into it, don't you think?" he interrupted, smiling at me reassuringly.

"Maybe so, but that isn't the point."

"That seems a very good point to me, but perhaps I'm obtuse. What is the point?"

"That there must be some reason for my going into this sort of a thing."

"Well, isn't there? Surely, you are not going into it without a real reason, or a number of them. You are not going into it for recreation, or as a new form of sport, or as a slumming expedition, or anything like that, are you? Pardon me, I am not trying to forestall your conclusion."

"I mean a reason on your part," I blurted. This suave boss was gently joshing me, I thought.

"On my part? Why, what other reason do you need than the palpable ones that there is a vacancy in the board from your ward, that I, as the humble instrument of my party, offer you the nomination for that vacancy. Certainly, I would not make the offer if I did not consider you eminently capable of taking on the duties of the place, and imparting distinction thereto, I may add."

"Thank you," I said, with such irony as I could command. "But I wish you would answer my question. Why did you select me for this place?"

"My dear Captain, I have just answered that. If you think there is anything ulterior in my offer you misjudge me."

"Isn't there?"

"Not a thing."

"Do you mean that you are not obligating me in any way if I take it, not asking for any promises, nor tying any strings on me?"

"You've been reading what my commentators in the daily press say about me. Sometimes, a political boss—the designation is theirs, not mine—may be actuated by perfectly simple, obvious motives, although it is very hard to make the political writers understand that. They insist on his being Machiavellian at all times. That makes their copy more interesting. Now, then, if you want this nomination you can have it without any promise of any kind to me, without any obligation other than your small political assessment, without a single string of any sort tied to you. Is that

straightforward and plain enough to still your qualms?"

He looked at me squarely and spoke sincerely. I was uncomfortable, but I persisted.

"It seems so, but how am I to know it?"

I said that before I thought how it would sound. I blushed over my rudeness. "Oh," I stammered, "I am sorry—I beg——"

He laughed. "Don't mind me," he said. "I am only a so-called boss, and naturally, one of the most despicable of creatures. I realize, perfectly, what your attitude of mind is towards me. That attitude of mind in you, and in those like you, comes, largely, from what you hear, not from what you know. However, I accept it as one of the necessities of the situation. It doesn't annoy me. It amuses me. Perhaps, if we are associated your view may change. Possibly not. At any rate, let us get back to the *res gestae*, as the lawyers would say. You want to know how you are to be convinced that what I say is true?"

"Not at all," I protested. "I didn't——"

"Don't make any excuses. The reputation my friends of the press and the opposition have made for me justifies your doubt. I repeat, if you take this nomination, as I hope you will, you are not obligated to me in any way, personally, or politically, except, of course, I hope that you will vote as an organization man on party matters if any come up. But I do not ask that even. You are entirely untrammelled, untied, unhampered so far as I am concerned. I cannot make it more definite than that. Is that satisfactory?"

"Yes, sir."

"Very good. We are now on a basis of full understanding as to pledges. Is there anything else?"

"Am I supposed to join any organization or anything like that?"

"Not unless you want to. Of course, you will be expected to look after the aldermanic affairs of your ward, as well as take your share of the general committee work, and there will be ward politics of one sort and another, but you'll find out about those as you go along."

I had a dozen things to ask about when I started to meet Hunkins, but I couldn't think of anything more then. So I said nothing.

"How about it?" asked Hunkins. "Will you run?"

"Yes."

"I'm glad to hear it. You will be assessed one hundred dollars for necessary campaign expenses. The election will be in three weeks. You won't have to make a campaign."

"Why not?"

"I understand you will not be opposed by Pendergrast. He couldn't win, anyhow, and won't try."

"Suppose he does put up somebody?"

"Then we'll turn in and beat him."

That was all there was to it, except some talk we had about various details. I was there less than thirty minutes. As I left I couldn't resist the temptation to make one more trial at discovering why Hunkins picked me for the place.

"I wish I could know, Mr. Hunkins, just why you are making this experiment with me."

He laughed. "Can't entirely disabuse your mind

that there is a catch to it, can you? Well, there isn't. Any mystery that shrouds it is supplied by yourself. It's a straight, open, political proposition with me. I want a candidate. You fill the bill. There you are. However, if that doesn't satisfy you, remember what old Don Quixote said: 'El tiempo es el descubridor de todas las cosas.' Do you know Spanish?"

"Only a few cigar-box phrases."

"Well, what the Don had in mind when he made that remark is that time is the discoverer of all things. Suppose we leave it on that basis. I shall ask you to come to the ward committee meeting Monday night, when the nomination will be made. I'll attend to the newspapers. The reporters will be here this afternoon. Good-by."

I walked along Martin Street in a dubious frame of mind. A queer fish, this man Hunkins. Fancy a political boss handing me Cervantes in the original. I can't make him out.

Mindful of Steve's cautions about the afternoon newspaper reporters I secluded myself until four o'clock, and then went down to Dowd's office. Dowd was there, and Steve.

"Well," I said, as I entered, "I'm a regular politician now. I'm as good as elected to the Board of Aldermen, Hunkins tells me."

"Had your talk?" asked Dowd.

"Yes; had it at noon."

"Did he try any funny business?"

"Not a thing. He explicitly says he asks no pledges nor promises and holds me under no obligation of any kind except he hopes I will vote with the organi-

zation on party matters, and wants me to give the Ward Committee a hundred-dollar contribution."

"That's a wide-open and comparatively inexpensive programme," commented Steve.

"What's he driving at?" asked Dowd, half to himself, half to us. "I can't figure it. Something in his mind, that's sure enough. However, sufficient unto the day is the nomination thereof. Going to see Hunkins to-night, Steve?"

"Yes."

"Sound him a little, will you? It's a mystery to me, but I'm glad it happened. Interesting man, isn't he, Talbot?"

"He certainly is, and educated, too. He threw some Spanish at me as I left."

"Spanish?" said Steve. "He usually hands out Horace. He's a bug about Horace."

"Well, anyhow, he's perfectly open and above board with me in his talk, and I've accepted, on the theory that I can take care of myself, or if I can't I deserve whatever I get."

"Good platform," observed Dowd. "Is there to be any campaign?"

"Hunkins doesn't think so. He says Pendergrast will not nominate, as he understands it, but if he does we'll go in and lick him."

"He won't," said Steve. "Pendergrast told me."

"I'm sorry," Dowd observed. "We might have stirred things up a bit. Oh, well, it's all right. We can begin stirring when you get on the board. Know any of those birds you will associate with?"

"Not one of them."

"Your impressions will be interesting."

"Why? Are they such frightful highbinders?"

"How about it, Steve?" asked Dowd.

"They are an average lot of ward politicians," Steve replied, "except one or two. Cass is a high-class man, and so is Braden. The rest of them are ordinary. They are entirely dominated by Hunkins and Pendergrast except one wild Irishman named Kilmany, who is strong enough in the Thirteenth Ward to elect himself despite their opposition. Kilmany runs amuck whenever he feels liverish, and raises hell. He furnishes most of the copy, outside the routine, that is written about their meetings. Better tie up with him, George. He's erratic, but he's straight. Pendergrast is the operating member. He sits in the board. Hunkins deals from his room in Martin Street. He never is seen in the City Hall. It's an interesting game, and you'll have a lot of fun with it. Also, that gang legislates for the city, and have their importance."

"Is it as rotten as they say it is in campaign times?" I asked.

"No; nothing is. There may be some grafting in the matter of school-sites, and fire-house sites, and street extensions and paving, and so on, but not half as much as the outs claim there is. By and large, it isn't so bad; only, it's strictly political when it ought to be strictly civic. Still, there is large room for improvement, both there, and in the executive end of the City Hall."

"Have at it," exclaimed Dowd, "and now let's go somewhere where we can find the makings of a toast to the new member."

We found a place, and made three toasts instead of one. Next morning I got up early and sent out for a *News*. There it was, a half column of it, written in Steve's friendliest vein. I read it six times, each time with increasing interest and a refreshed sense of importance. After the sixth reading I saw myself nothing less than mayor, and didn't think the governorship so far off as it might be. Steve touched up all the high lights.

CHAPTER XIII

THE BEEFSTEAK PARTY

I SPENT most of the day listening to telephonic congratulations and commiserations, in the ratio of about ten commiserations to one congratulation. At first, I thought I would not answer, but I decided that I might as well get a consensus of the opinion of my friends, and that is what I obtained. The consensus of opinion, as I gather it, is that John J. Talbot should lose no time in instituting proceedings *de lunatico inquirendo* over his only son, Captain George Talbot, late of the United States Army. A few suggested shell shock as a contributing factor to my departure from the path of reason, in a decorously solicitous and sympathetic manner, hoping it is not as bad as it seems. The surmises as to whys and wherefores ranged from that heroic disaster to my mentality to an insinuation of congenital idiocy contributed by Fred Daskin.

Miss Crawford did not telephone, but Miss Harrow did. She was one of my few congratulators. She was glad to observe that one member of my highly-over-rated sex had spunk enough to do something positive, and she wished me well. I was hoping Miss Crawford would call. That's one reason why I didn't silence the telephone by taking off the receiver. Dad wasn't home. He left for New York at midnight.

"How are they coming?" Dowd asked me late in the afternoon, just as I was about to quit and call it a day.

"A heavy barrage has been laid down since morning," I answered. "Including high explosives, shrapnel and gas. No casualties as yet. However, it has been rather pointedly intimated to me that if I persist I shall become a pariah so far as the higher society of our city is concerned."

"Buck up," said Dowd. "I'd rather be a pariah than a Pharisee."

"It's not worrying me," I asserted, jauntily. It was, just the same. I felt a good deal like a cross between a fool and a fanatic. My friends were extremely candid in their conversations and conclusions.

"Don't let it," Dowd advised. "We'll put the bee on that whole bunch before we get through with this."

Hunkins asked me to come to a cigar store on Grant Street, in the upper and least fashionable end of our ward, at eight o'clock on Monday night. He was there when I arrived and five others in a room behind the store. He presented me to the five others, who are, I learned, the Ward Committee—Messrs. Warnock, Parks, Shultz, Kelly and Armstrong.

"How'do," said Warnock, the chairman. "Pleased t'meet cha." The others said identically the same thing, shaking hands stiffly, in their turns. They were none too cordial. I looked them over. Warnock runs the cigar store and, also, sells newspapers and magazines. He is tall, slim, furtive and suspicious. Parks is a little, fussy man, truculent like all little men. Shultz is a butcher, and looks it. Kelly has a coal and wood

yard and Armstrong is one of those city factotums—notary, insurance agent, and so on.

“Come t’ order,” demanded Warnock, rapping on the green-covered table. “Object meetin’s t’ nom’nate candidate for vacancy Board of Aldermen. Nom’nations s’in order.”

“I nom’nate this here guy—what’s his name?” Kelly turned to Hunkins.

“Captain George Talbot,” Hunkins instructed, gravely.

“Sure; I forgot; Cap’n George Talbot.”

“Seckind it,” snapped Parks.

“Any other nom’nations?” asked Warnock. “If not question’s s’on nom’nation made. All’n favor nom’nation Captain George Talbot say aye; contrary, no; ayes have it; Captain George Talbot duly nom’nated for member Board Aldermen, Second Ward. Motion t’adjourn s’in order; moved’n seconded we adjourn; carried.”

He hit the table a whack with his fist and turned to Hunkins: “S’all-right, boss. Deed’s done.”

“Thank you, gentlemen,” said Hunkins. “I am sure Captain Talbot will be a most valuable alderman from your ward.”

I shook hands all around again, and thanked them. Then, after Hunkins got a copy of the proceedings duly attested by Warnock and Parks, the secretary, we left together.

“Not much class to that outfit,” I remarked, as we walked to the corner where I had my car.

“Very little,” Hunkins replied, “but they’re the best we can get. What do you suppose your friends in this

ward—any of them—would say if asked to serve on the ward committee? You needn't tell me for I know. I've tried to induce them. A ward committee is an important unit in a party's political organization, but men like the majority of the residents of this ward—business men and professional men—rich men—consider such service beneath them. They howl about heeler-domination of politics, and refuse to offer the slightest help towards better representation. We have to take those we can get. Damn these Pharisees who rail at rotten politics and will do nothing to help purify it! They deserve all they have handed to them."

That was the first time in my presence Hunkins was other than the suave and ironical leader. I looked at him in surprise.

"Excuse me," he said, "but those are my sentiments. I am not aspersing your friends, individually, but speaking of the type."

"Don't spare them on my account," I told him. "You won't hurt my feelings. A lot of them called me up yesterday."

"I thought they would," said Hunkins. "I know them."

Hunkins was right. The opposition made no nomination. The newspapers paid scant attention to this important event in politics. Steve Fox printed two or three short and friendly items; the opposition papers had a facetious paragraph or two about the Silk Stocking Ward being indubitably affected by the high cost of living, because this new nominee cannot, possibly, be considered more than a silk sock, if that; and that is all there was to it. The fellows at the club, beyond

asking me how much I am paying for votes, and a few things like that, passed the matter over as of no importance. Indeed, the entire city took it so calmly that I suffered considerable curtailment of conceit over my prodigious resolve and patriotic enterprise. Election day came, and only about a hundred votes were cast, but that night Hunkins called me up and said:

"Congratulations. It's unanimous. I suggest that you go to the City Hall to-morrow and swear in, and good luck to you."

I took the oath of office, and attended my first meeting of the board on the following Monday night. Meantime, J. J. Cornwell, president of the board, informed me that I am to serve on the Schools Committee, and the Streets Committee. "Two of the most important committees," Steve Fox commented when I told him about my assignments. "Bill Hunkins is looking out for you, all right."

I spent the next month reading the city charter, familiarizing myself with procedure, and in sitting in and saying nothing, but listening hard, at committee meetings. I soon discovered that the Monday night meetings of the board are but ratification meetings, to put over publicly what has been decided upon privately. I heard the bitterest sort of partisan speeches on the floor of the aldermanic chamber, and saw scenes that I thought would develop into fist fights between explosive partisans of one ordinance or another; but learned that these are only a part of the show. They mean nothing, because on each Monday afternoon Tom Pendergrast and J. J. Cornwell have a meeting in the room on the second floor over Corn-

well's saloon, at the corner of First and Arnold Streets, and lay out the programme for each Monday night meeting.

There is a perfect working arrangement. Control of the board shifts between the two parties at regular intervals. That is, for a certain specified time one side has a majority, and for a certain following and specified time the control rests with the other side. That distributes patronage on an equal basis. Also under the direction of Pendergrast, and, I assume, Hunkins, a majority can be secured for any project that is desirable to them. The members vote as they are told. I heard nothing from Hunkins, and saw him but once or twice. I vote with my party, when there is a party division, and take whatever stand I think best on other matters. My colleagues are cordial enough, but evidently look on me somewhat suspiciously. I am not yet in the gang.

There are nineteen members of our board of aldermen, and fourteen of these are typical city politicians, mostly business men in their wards, or saloon-keepers. There are two butchers, a druggist, a grocer, and so on. Cornwell, the president, runs a saloon, and I hear that Pendergrast owns one—Paddy Rattigan's in West Monmouth Street—but does not appear as owner. The five outsiders are Kilmany, the Irishman from the Thirteenth Steve Fox told me about; a mystified professor in the college who deemed it his duty to serve the city, was elected by some fluke and spends all his time trying to get an eugenic ordinance passed; Cass, who runs a sash-and-blind factory in the Nineteenth Ward; Braden, who is a grain man, and myself. Cass

and Braden are good, substantial business men, and I am cultivating them.

The others are friendly enough in their way, fond of high-colored jokes and stories, given to practical joking among themselves, and liberal spenders at the bars. They are experts at rough badinage that they call "kiddin'," and apply the most obscene and offensive epithets to one another in the most casual manner. They like to foregather in back rooms of saloons and play forty-fives or pinochle, and every one of them is ready to bet on any proposition that comes along. Indeed, their favorite argument is "I betcha," and they will bet, too, in good sized amounts. They have the most naïve idea of civic responsibility, considering it entirely a matter of party politics, but they fight for the ultimate dollar, and the final curbstone for improvements in their wards, and look out for their constituents and the rights of them jealously.

This is the atmosphere of my new situation in life. It does not jar me much. I was in the Army for eighteen months, among men peeled down to the raw. I keep busy, circulating among the city departments and talking with their heads. The mayor is Hiram G. Spearle, a Pendergrast man. Indeed, the entire city administration is Pendergrastic. My most illuminating discovery is this: The fights for the mayoralty are generally real fights, although there have been times when combinations were made. That is, the two bosses select their candidates and go to it. The one who, because of any given set of circumstances, gets the most votes holds rigidly to partisanship in his appointments

and projects, but there is always an understanding over perquisites.

If Hunkins wins Pendergrast does not entirely lose, for there is a sort of a working agreement, on the routine matters, between the two; and so if Pendergrast wins. The primaries and elections are usually fought out with each side trying to win. Normally, the city is anti-Pendergrast, but now and then there are local issues that turn out the majority officials, and put in representatives of the Pendergrast minority. Spearle is mayor now, for example, because of a wage-and-hours labor trouble that was skillfully developed into a party issue by the Pendergrast strategists, who successfully maintained the claim that it was a party matter because most of the arbitrary employers are more or less identified with the Hunkins organization, not as members, but as supporters. It was a far cry, but it worked.

The thing that interests me most is the uncanny expertness of the minor city officials in city affairs. They have it all pat. They know the charter, know the ordinances, know the procedures, know the figures. The city clerk is an amazing fellow. He is a round and oily person named Charley Elmer, and his job is in perpetuity, for he is the guide, handy man, and encyclopedia for the other city officials. He knows everything, and as he is oleagiously amenable to instructions from whatever boss may be in power he stays on through administration after administration. When asked what his politics is he always replies, unctuously: "I belong to the Elmer party."

"I wonder if we might not have a better city admin-

istration if the business men of the city, and the professional men, would go to the pains of finding out as much about the city and its workings as these politicians find out," I said to Dowd one day.

"You wonder," Dowd replied. "You know we would, but that's a Utopian idea. How can you expect the bulk of these fellows to be interested in anything but getting rich. Isn't money the criterion of success in these United States. There are no large fortunes to be made in city administration. That's the answer."

I reached real terms of acquaintance with my colleagues when the member from the Seventh, Rudolph Shultz, gave a beefsteak party at his place in the country. Rudolph is a butcher, big, red-faced, and German. He has lived in this country for thirty years, and is as American as any of us; a burly, jolly, slow-thinking, but hard-headed citizen. Rudolph has a way with him when it comes to handling beefsteaks that I had heard about. Once a year he gives a big party, to which the city officials, and outside politicians, and the political reporters all go. This party, I discovered, is to be more *recherche*. None but the aldermen, Hunkins, and one or two others will participate.

We drove out about noon and found Rudolph busy with his steaks. He had these steaks in preparation for the event. They were especially selected by himself, especially cut, and hung for just the right period. He was in his kitchen, with a big apron on, his sleeves rolled up, two aproned young fellows as assistants, and surrounded by slabs of the best-looking beef I ever saw.

"Better go out and watch him," advised Hunkins,

"if you have never seen him work. It's interesting."

I went out, and was greeted explosively by Rudolph:

"Well, young feller, you won't get no grub in the Union Club like this, hey?"

"Probably not," I said, and took a stand near him.

There was a big pot on the range, from which there came clouds of steam, and a most savory odor.

"That's the Brunswick stew," Rudolph told me. "I make him from what I trim off the steaks and a few other things put in. We eat him before I put the steaks on the fire, just to get up an appetite."

He fussed with his stew, and presently bellowed: "Stew's ready! Come and get it!"

Each guest came into the kitchen with a pannikin, and Rudolph ladled each pannikin full of the stew, which was a reddish-brown concoction, and smelled most amazingly good. I took a pannikin, and got mine. We went into the dining room, where we found bread, butter, radishes, and celery on the table. "You hurry and eat him," Rudolph cautioned, "and come back here and I show you how to cook steak."

I hurried, but the stew was so good that I went back for more. "Hey, young feller," said Rudolph. "You like him. Well, save some room for steak."

After I finished, and the other guests were mostly ranged about three poker tables, I went out to the kitchen again. Rudolph was ready to cook his steaks. He had them in a row on the table, each on a piece of oiled paper. He patted them lovingly. "No beef like that nearer than Chicago," he said. "I spent a long time picking them steaks."

There was a large pan of what looked to be wet

salt on the end of the table, a great plate of golden butter, with pepper and other shakers, and big carving knives, and spoons and sharpening steels.

"What's that?" I asked, pointing to the pan.

"Salt," said Rudolph. "You watch."

One of the assistants had another big pan of salt under the faucet at the sink and was carefully dampening it, letting water run on it and mixing the water through the salt.

"Now, then," said Rudolph. "Here we go."

He ministered to the steaks variously with the butter, the pepper and some of the other shakers. Then he took a large broiler, made of heavy wire, and opened it flat on the table. On the under side of the broiler he spread a piece of waxed paper. Then he took great handfuls of the wet salt, and made a layer of it nearly three inches thick covering the oiled paper evenly over all its surface. That layer patted into smoothness and the proper depth, Rudolph selected a steak and laid the steak on the salt. Then he covered the steak with salt, to the depth of another three inches, packed salt around the sides until the steak was completely encased in this packing of salt, put another piece of oiled paper on top, closed and fastened the top side of the broiler over that and carried the broiler to the fire. He had a deep bed of glowing charcoal, and he carefully adjusted the broiler over that bed. He came back to the table and began to prepare another steak in the same way.

"Won't it be too salt?" I asked.

"You wait," said Rudolph.

I waited, and watched him prepare several other

steaks the same way. Meantime, the oiled paper had burned away on the first steak and the salt was baking into a hard mass. Rudolph tested this from time to time, felt the heat, and solidity of it. "When she's just right then I take him off," he told me. One of the assistants cut great loaves of bread into slices about three inches by two, and the other filled pewter mugs with ale.

Presently, Rudolph's investigations of the gleaming mass of salt in the broiler satisfied him that the time was at hand for further action. He had prodded often, and felt the heat with moistened finger tip. The salt had taken on a baked, almost annealed, glisten. It was hard and hot. Rudolph took the broiler from the fire, and carried it to the table. He lifted the upper half of the broiler, hit the hardened salt two or three raps with a hammer, and the shell of it broke away, exposing the steak within, as the broken matrix displays the glowing opal.

That is what it called to my mind—a matrix half removed from a gem, for that steak was a gem—a jewel of radiant ray. It lay there, steaming, scenting the air of the kitchen with its fragrance, all reds and browns and reddish-grays, with the juice oozing from it, and the savor of it already on the palate.

"There," said Rudolph, after close inspection. "She's all right. Get yourself a chunk of bread."

I took a piece of bread, and Rudolph carved a small slice of the steak and laid it on the bread. The juice seeped into the bread, staining it a pale red. I bit into it. That taste was the ultimate of my carnivorous

experience. It was the most delicious morsel of meat I ever tasted. I reached for another bit of bread.

"Hah," laughed Rudolph. "Not too salt, hey?"

Another steak was cooking while Rudolph carved this one into small slices. The assistants hustled the platters of bread, and the mugs of ale into the dining room.

"Hi, there, you gamblers!" Rudolph shouted to the poker players. "She's ready! Come and get him!"

Cards were dropped instantly, and the guests moved to the table noisily. Rudolph came in carrying the first installment of the steak, on a platter, the slices of it half submerged in the juices. There were forks, but none was used. We had fingers. Each man took a bit of the steak, laid it on bread, and devoured the combination. Rudolph sent in platter after platter of the slices, and, towards the end, came in with especial tidbits which he urged on Hunkins and myself and one or two others—sections of bone with shreds of the succulent meat on them, and slices of the tenderest portions.

"I figure on getting away with about four pounds at one of these affairs," Kilmany said to me, and recited the epic of Tom Dorgan, who ate seven and a half pounds once, on a bet. Tom has now passed to his reward, but his memory as a trencherman remains gloriously green.

Personally, I do not think Kilmany had any the better of me in the matter of consumption tonnage.

CHAPTER XIV

RUDOLPH PLAYS POKER

WHEN every man was to his capacity of steak, the poker tables became active again. "Want to sit in?" they asked me.

"Not just yet," I told them. "I'll look on for a time."

"Don't blame you," said Hunkins. "Most of these pirates play them very close to their chests. Better pick out a soft spot, if you can find one, before you buy chips."

I moved from table to table, watching the play. There was a two-dollar limit game, all jack pots, with roodles when a full house or better was called that raised the limit to four dollars for a round. There was a dollar-limit game, with deuces and joker wild, where they played hop-ups, kilters, straights around the corner, big Dick, and other complicated combinations, and dealt a hand of cyclone each seventh deal—seven-card stud poker with two cards buried. That was too fast for me, even if it was only a dollar-limit game, for threes and small fulls were mere chaff; and although the limit was but a dollar, they bet wildly, amid all sorts of excitement, quarrels and side wagers.

The big game was the third one, table stakes. Hun-

kins, Cass, Tompkins, Cornwell, and Pendergrast were in this. They played straight poker, with no frills or innovations, and I settled down to look on. My inclination was to buy a stack in the two-dollar game, but I thought I'd assay the table-stake contest first. That might be worth a trial. They are all good, cold, nervy poker players, but friendly. A lot of joshing went back and forth across the table. Hunkins and Cass are conservative, calculating players, and Tompkins and Pendergrast liberal with a tendency to bluff. Cornwell has them before he bets them.

"Ought to be six in this," said Cass. "Where's Rudolph?"

"Outside," Cornwell replied.

"Hey, Rudolph, come here!" Cass shouted.

Rudolph came ponderously in, smoking a big cigar, his face redder than usual from the heat of the stove, still wearing his apron, and highly pleased over the success of his party.

"What is?" asked Rudolph.

"Got any money?"

"Haf I got any money?" Rudolph repeated. "I got more than you ever see. Here. Look."

He put a great paw into his trousers pocket and brought out a roll of yellow-backed bills with a rubber band around it. "Haf I got any money?" he asked, waving his roll about. "I haf got money that is to burn."

"How much?"

"Never mind how much. More than you."

"Well, get in here, then, and pretty soon you won't have so much. Take a seat."

"I'll show you," protested Rudolph, and he shoved a chair in. "What's the game?"

"Table stakes."

Rudolph slapped his roll of money on the table. "I'll play that," he said.

"For the love of Mike, Rudolph!" protested Cass. "This is a friendly game. Be decent. Take a couple of stacks of blues and play like a gentleman, not like a gambler."

"Hah," taunted Rudolph, "you afraid, hey? Too much money for you tin-horns, ain't it? All or not any. What you say?"

"How much in that roll?" demanded Cass.

"A t'ousand dollars."

"Let him in," said Tompkins, "and we'll trim that upholstery off the big Dutchman."

"Go ahead," assented Rudolph. "You're welcome if you can get it."

I could see a tightening up as soon as this big wad of money was declared in, and I moved closer to watch the play. Rudolph was jovially and expansively full of his own ale, and he went into every pot that came along. Cards were running poorly, and nobody won or lost must, although Rudolph boosted out several hands that were better than his own. After half an hour or so of see-sawing, Rudolph was called to the kitchen to superintend the tapping of another keg of ale.

"Look here," said Tompkins, after Rudolph left, "let's teach that big butcher a lesson. He's wallowed in here and is balling the game all up with his mess of money. I haven't got enough with me to raise him

out, but we ought to sting him good, keep the money for a while and then hand it back to him."

"What's the big idea?" asked Cass.

"Cold deck him. Get him out of the room again some time, and deal him a full house. Have another one out that will top him. He'll bet his fool head off, and then we'll strip him on the call, and teach him some manners. What do you say?"

Everybody agreed, and Tompkins continued: "I haven't got enough cash to hit him. Contributions, please."

The other players handed Tompkins various sums of money, of which Tompkins made a record. "Nine twenty," he said. "Need eighty more."

"I'm clean," said Cornwell.

"So am I," said Hunkins.

"Me, too," said Cass.

Tompkins look at me, inquiringly. "Got eighty seeds?" he asked.

"I think so," I said, and handed him four twenty-dollar bills, which cleaned me, too.

As this transaction was concluded Rudolph rumbled into the room again, and sat down at his place.

"Deal 'em up," he said. "I can't rob you suckers without cards."

The deal was made, and the game continued with no exciting phases. Small cards were the rule. Kings, aces or two pairs got most pots. After a time Tompkins went out, and stayed a few minutes. The game went on. Presently, one of the assistants came in and told Rudolph he was wanted on the telephone. He lumbered out after the call was made.

"Quick, now," said Tompkins. "I've framed a telephone call for him from a house down the road. Sent Holder. It will keep him five or six minutes. Gimme those red cards."

Tompkins took the red deck, ruffled the cards hurriedly, and arranged them so a full house, three queens and a pair of nines, would fall to Rudolph, and three kings and a small pair to himself. He laid the red deck on the table in front of Cass, after whose deal Rudolph had the first say.

"I'll holler for the red cards next time the deal gets around to you," said Tompkins to Cass, "and you deal 'em. Then I'll do the rest."

Rudolph rumbled back. "Anything happen?" he asked.

"Not a thing," said Hunkins, "except that with you out and a decent game going I managed to win a pot."

"Never mind about my game," said Rudolph. "You bet 'em if you have 'em. I'll learn you, you tin-horns. I'll make you pay for them steaks, by golly. Deal 'em."

The deal was made, and the hand played. Then, just before the deal passed to Cass, Tompkins exclaimed: "Dod-gast these blue cards. I can't get a pair. Stick in that red deck, Cass. They're made up."

Cass picked up the cards, and ostentatiously offered them to Hunkins to cut. "Let them run," said Hunkins, with a wave of his hand.

Cass dealt carefully. I could see, after each had his five, that the cards had fallen right, for Tompkins had a satisfied smile on his face, and Rudolph already was clawing at his chips.

"It'll cost this many to play with me," announced Rudolph, pushing in a hundred-dollar stack of blues. "I'll keep you honest."

Everybody passed up to Tompkins. He laid his hand down on the table. "One moment," he said, "this looks as if it is going to be good. I'll declare five hundred that's in my pocket."

"Put up!" insisted Rudolph. "My money's here. Declare what you like, but show it."

"All right," and Tompkins reached into his pocket and drew out our combined contributions. "Since you are so fresh, Dutchy, with your talk about keeping folks honest I'll just make it a thousand, and here it is." He stuck the money under his chips.

"What you do?" asked Rudolph, eagerly.

"Do? Why, you big stiff, I'll raise you two hundred."

"Now you talk like you was playin' poker, not marbles," commented Rudolph. "Come to that."

He raised Tompkins three hundred dollars. "Right back at you," said Tompkins, raising it two hundred more.

"Come again," said Rudolph, after skinning his cards clumsily. He raised it two hundred more.

"That lets me out," said Tompkins. "I'll call."

"Hah," jeered Rudolph. "Had to quit. Tin-horn sport, ain't you? A bum gambler!"

After Tompkins had evened the pot Cass asked, "How many cards, Rudolph?"

"Wait a minute. I take my time." He looked his cards over, his lips working as he conned them. Then he smiled blandly around the table.

"I guess I take t'ree," he said.

"What?" yelled Tompkins. "You want three?"

"Ain't I entitled to 'em?" asked Rudolph. "I pay for the privilege, don't I?"

"You sure did, you poor mutt," answered Tompkins.

"Take five if you want to. Go ahead and draw your fool head off, and gimme that money."

"Hold on!" Rudolph protested. "It ain't over yet. Gif me t'ree."

Further details are too painful. Rudolph threw away his three queens, and caught two more nines. And we never were able to convince him that it was all a joke.

"I win it fair, don't I?" he asked. "Well, then I keep it."

And he did.

CHAPTER XV

A CALL TO ARMS

I ATTENDED the weekly committee meetings at the Tucker Building headquarters. We organized our central committee, making Dowd chairman of it, and Miss Crawford secretary.

"There was some news about this movement in the dispatches from Paris to-day," Dowd said one Friday night. "The Americans over there have had a conference and steps are being taken to get an organization going. It is the plan to do what can be done in France with the American material at hand, and to have a convention here later at which a general organization and its plan and scope will be discussed and adopted. That fits in with our work very well."

"It seems to me that it will delay us," said Colonel Anderson.

"On the contrary it will help us. You see, if we go ahead and complete our organization here, enrolling all the men we can, and forming our auxiliary women's branches, we will have something tangible, something done, when the business of making the national organization gets under way. We can go to that national gathering with a big power behind us, and use that power whatever way seems to be best for our pur-

poses and the purposes of the national body. Instead of delaying it must hurry us, for it will not do to let any outsiders come in here and get our men away from us."

"How many men of our total are discharged and back?" I asked.

"Between four and five thousand," Miss Crawford replied. "It will be six months, at least, before they are all here, and we can have complete access to them. We have set up ward committees in thirteen of the nineteen wards, and have enrolled, practically, sixty per cent. of all the soldiers we have reached. The others are holding back for one reason or another, but the boys are assimilating the idea, and we shall have ninety per cent. of them before we are finished. Next week we shall begin a series of meetings, to be addressed by various speakers from this committee, including you, Captain Talbot."

She looked at me with a challenging sort of smile. I was startled, and confused.

"Me?" I exclaimed. "Why, I never made a speech in my life."

"Well, you will make several next week; won't he, Mr. Dowd?"

"He certainly will, unless he disobeys his commanding officer, which is myself. You'll have to do it, Talbot, and so will all the rest of us."

"I'm no orator," I protested.

"I hope not. This town is all cluttered up with orators. What we want is a talker. You can talk, can't you?"

"Not in public."

"Well, you'll have to take a shot at it. Might as well begin that way as any other. It will be good practice for your coming flights of eloquence in the board of aldermen."

I might have fought Dowd further on the matter, but I saw Miss Crawford regarding me in a manner that made me certain she thought me afraid, and I said: "Oh, all right. I'll do my share, of course. Where do I inflict myself on the soldiers, and when?"

The list of assignments was read. I was scheduled for the Eighth, the Tenth and the Seventeenth wards, on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday nights.

"Some circulars are prepared," Miss Crawford said, "and there will be notices in the newspapers. All you have to do is to go to the meeting place, and when your time comes tell the soldiers what the objects are of this organization."

"Talk to them just the way you talked to me when you first came to see me," Dowd advised.

Some of the others were nervous about their assignments, too, but they consented. "What about the women?" I asked.

"Too early for that as yet," Miss Crawford told me. "That will come later."

My assignment for Tuesday night was at Hurley's Hall, in the Eighth Ward, which is a ward where many of our factory workers live. I got there at eight o'clock, and found a hundred and fifty men, and a few women in the hall. Peter Davidson, a sergeant who served with me, was chairman of the meeting. He told the boys they had been called together to consider the feasibility of forming an organization for

mutual association, protection and advantage of all men who served in the army or the navy.

"It is an opportunity to continue the comradeship of our service in the war," he said, "and to put into practical application the lessons that service taught us. It will enable us to obtain for ourselves some of the things we fought for, through organization, and self protection, and it will extend to many points, and touch on many interests. If we organize, and stand together, we can benefit ourselves, and the city in which we live. Furthermore, there will be state and national organizations of the men who wore the khaki of the Army and blue of the Navy, and we can have a big say in these, and thus extend our influence and efforts to state and national affairs, as well as do our part here at home."

Sergeant Davidson spoke easily and forcefully. It seemed to me that he exhausted the subject before he turned and said: "I now have the pleasure of introducing to you the captain I served under in France—Captain George Talbot, who will now address you."

There was much hand-clapping and stamping of feet as I arose, and walked out to the front of the platform. I was nervous, and afraid. I had thought out a way to begin my talk, but I couldn't remember a word of it. So, having to say something, I asked: "How many of you boys were in the service?"

"All of us!" they shouted.

"How many got to France?"

"We did," yelled about half of them.

Those questions and the apparent interest of the boys steadied me, and I spoke to them for nearly an

hour, giving them my views, and the views of Dowd, which I adopted as mine, as to why it will be a good thing to go into this organization. I assured them I am for it heart and soul, and why. I told a few war stories, described one or two of the fights Davidson and I were in, and got a great cheer as I concluded.

Then we sang some army songs, and Davidson asked all those who would join to come up and sign a tentative roster for that ward's section of the inclusive city organization. I had the same success at my other meetings, and improved my speech considerably.

It was reported at the Friday night meeting that the other speakers had equally encouraging receptions. Miss Crawford tabulated the signatures turned in from each meeting, and said we secured twenty-five hundred new names, which put our total of declared membership over three thousand. The office force was increased, and formal pledges sent to each of the signers to be returned to headquarters. In the following week we opened a room in the Sixth Ward, which is central, putting it in charge of Sergeant Ralston, who had a good deal to do with entertaining the soldiers in his sector in France, and has ideas. I made a speech there one night, to about two hundred members, and was surprised to find they liked it.

Meantime, I had spoken once or twice, briefly, in my aldermanic capacity. Dad dropped in one night when I was advocating a police reform, and approved. "Good, plain, business-like statement," he said. "Go to it." That was the first comment Dad made on my official performances. We keep off that topic at home.

Dad, apparently, isn't inclined to talk about it, and is waiting for results. At the club, and other places, where I meet Daskin, and Chambers and the crowd, it is now an old story. They look on me as having a new fad to fool with, but expect that I'll tire of it presently, and come back to the golf and bridge and dancing circles.

Hunkins called my attention to the police change I advocated. He said it is good politics, because most of the policemen are for it, but didn't ask me to advocate it. It involves a shift in the platoon systems, and I canvassed some of the patrolmen, and found them in favor of it. That was the only communication I had from Hunkins touching in any way on my duties on the board for the first four months. Then one day he called me on the telephone.

"Will it be convenient for you to come over to the house to-night?" he asked.

"It will."

"All right, make it eight o'clock if you please." I went over.

"How are things going?" he asked, after we were seated in his little office.

"Pretty well. Of course, I am a greenhorn yet, but I am gradually getting onto the way things work and are worked, and acquiring some ideas as to what can and what cannot be done."

"How do they treat you?"

"At first as a curiosity, but now as something entirely superfluous to the regular course of business, but there, and to be tolerated for the time being."

Hunkins laughed. "A close corporation," he said. "They're not unfriendly, are they?"

"Oh, no; merely indifferent. Pendergrast is the most offish one of the lot. The rest of the regulars refer to me as 'Cholly Highbrow,' and let it go at that."

"Well, let's stir them up a bit."

"What do you mean?"

Hunkins lighted a cigarette, and took a folded paper from his pocket. "Do you know Billy Miller?" he asked, most irrelevantly, I thought.

"The City Treasurer?"

"Yes."

"I've met him. That's about all."

"Know anything about him?"

"Nothing, except that he seems to be extraordinarily popular with everybody, and is a smiling, glad-handed, affable sort of a person."

"He's all of that. Billy Miller, I think, is the best-known and most-liked of the city officials. He has been treasurer for eight years. We've never been able to beat him. Everybody in the city knows him, and everybody likes him—a fine, pleasant-spoken, kindly, obliging man. That's what is the matter with him."

"What is?"

"He's too obliging for his own good."

"I don't understand."

"Billy Miller is a defaulter."

Hunkins spoke as calmly as if he were telling me that Billy Miller is a good accountant. It struck me as a most sensational sort of a statement, and I wondered at his impassiveness.

"A defaulter?" I repeated. "Billy Miller is?"

"Yes. He is short \$156,000 of city money, and has been for a long time."

"Why hasn't he been exposed and punished?"

"Politics."

"Pretty rotten politics, it seems to me, that will protect a defaulter of city money."

"Granted, but politics all the same. You see, Miller hasn't taken a cent of the money for his own use. He's a victim. That's the devil of it so far as he is concerned."

"What did he do with it, then?"

"Lent it to politicians. This is the way of it: As I have told you Miller is a soft-hearted, good-natured, easy-going man, vain of his position and vainer of his popularity and his reputation for strict honesty. These men took advantage of all these weaknesses. Three or four years ago they came to him with the story that they had formed a combination to exploit a mine in Arizona with a fortune in it for all of them. They pointed out to Miller that he could safely advance some money to them for a short period from the sinking fund, where it would never be missed. Pendergrast headed this company, and all of them were political associates and pals of Miller's. They promised Miller that he would be let in for a big share of the enormous profits. I've also heard they told him they would not support him for re-election if he refused them.

"They worked on his vanity, his cupidity, his desire to remain in office, and he finally advanced them \$50,000 on their various I. O. U.'s for certain allotted

portions of the amount, and their sacred protestations that the mine would be paying in a few months, and that they all would be rich. After that, the rest was easy."

"Easy? You mean that Miller kept on lending them money?"

"Exactly. Miller was then in the position of a bank that has a big line of credit out to a man in difficulties. The bank is forced to give that man further credit to protect what he has already borrowed. They didn't pay; said they couldn't. The mine took more than they expected, but they assured Miller it would be all right, and they would be able to make complete repayment if he would advance them some more money to enable them to complete their operations. Miller was helpless. In any event he was short \$50,000, for the borrowers said, flatly, they could not repay without extensions of time and further advances. That left Miller a defaulter, with these men culpable only as compounders of a felony in a city where they can most likely escape punishment. So, to protect himself, he took a further chance on them, weakly relying on their fervent promises to repay, and their glowing prospectus for the mine, and the result is that he is now short \$156,000, and there is hell to pay."

I was so interested I sat on the edge of my chair leaning forward to catch every word of Hunkins' dispassionate recital.

"Is it coming out?" I asked, excitedly.

"Not if the Pendergrast outfit can prevent it. They got the money. They are hustling around now to raise enough to make up the deficit, because Miller is at the

end of his string. There is bond payment due on September first, and the sinking fund is \$156,000 shy. He cannot transfer the money from any other fund, because that will ball him up just as badly, and expose him. He has just squeaked through on a couple of manipulations like that, and doesn't dare try another. He is howling for his money. It is pay or play with him."

Hunkins sat with the folded paper in his hands, eyeing me closely to see what impression the story made on me. I was in great commotion, not only over the disclosure, but because I was entirely in the dark as to why Hunkins called me over to make it to me. Why? I couldn't frame any sort of an answer, much less one that was plausible. However, it was my turn to make some comment.

"It should be exposed," I said.

"Certainly," Hunkins replied. "That's what I want to talk to you about."

"Me? Where do I come in?" It was more exciting than I thought it was at first, with me in it, but pounding in the back of my head was the insistent query: What's behind this? What is his motive? I couldn't fathom him.

"You enter, if you like, in your capacity as alderman from the Second Ward," he replied, as if that was a most natural and logical position for a part in it for me. "I'll explain. We are coming into a mayoralty campaign. We want to win. It will be a hard job, because Spearle is not only a pretty fair mayor, but is a popular citizen. The reason the gang who milked Miller are trying so hard to cover is be-

cause they know, what I know, that such a distinctly political scandal in a city administration at this time will defeat them. Sure to. And it may send some of them to jail. They are trying to get the money, but that is difficult, for they have to raise it surreptitiously. They can't borrow \$156,000 without telling what they want it for, and that closes the ordinary sources to them, partially, at least. They do not care a whoop about Miller. They are protecting themselves, and their political organization. Now, then, if they can have a few weeks they may scrape this amount together, and be able to cover. That will save them, but it won't help us. Therefore, I think it well to expose them immediately, before they are able to make good. It would be better if we could wait until just before the election, but we can't take that chance."

I listened closely, but drew a blank so far as my part in it was revealed to me. I couldn't figure what my position as alderman has to do with exposing Billy Miller's shortage.

"You'll have to make it a little plainer than that, Mr. Hunkins," I said. "I don't get your drift."

"My suggestion is this: I have the exact figures of all these transactions, taken from the city books by a friend of mine who has the opportunity, being a clerk in the city treasurer's office. He discovered what was going on by accident, not through any superior detective ability, and spent a long time making a thorough investigation. The figures are authentic. I had them investigated by expert accountants one Saturday and Sunday when Miller was away, and the office closed. My man saw to it that the books were available. I

gravely, "when you are playing it with tough people. One other point: Possibly you think I am not stating the case correctly. Look at this."

He handed me the paper, a certified statement by the biggest firm of accountants in the city, that there is a deficit in the sinking fund of \$156,000, that that deficit is covered only by personal I. O. U.'s of the seven men named therein, each in the sum set opposite his name; and that this information comes from the books of the city treasurer. Pendergrast led, with \$47,000. The others had secured smaller sums, but James K. Skidmore, at the bottom of the list, had dipped in for \$12,500, which was the least amount of the borrowings.

"Hits a lot of your friends," I said, not exactly knowing why.

"My friends?" asked Hunkins, mildly.

"Yes; the general understanding is that you and Pendergrast work together."

Hunkins laughed. "Oh," he said, "that's it, is it? 'Ne scutica dignus horribili sectere flagello,' as Horace says. Don't pursue with a scourge what is only worth a whipping. I assure you that my relations with Pendergrast do not extend to larceny. I have no partners in such enterprises of that sort as I undertake. You should know by this time that I am a lone wolf in my depredations. Pendergrast and I may have occasional deals together, but I always conduct my higher crimes against the public alone. Really, you do me wrong in thinking that when I break the Eighth Commandment, for example, I form a company for the project; not at all. My associations with Pender-

grast are minor ones—misdemeanors, perhaps, but no more than that. Our fellows are quite clear on this, I assure you."

His irony confused me. "I didn't mean that," I protested.

"It's perfectly all right," he said. "You are not to blame for voicing what our leading citizens have been saying for years, without taking the trouble to investigate, or having any proof. But we are straying afield. The question before the house is: Do you want to do this?"

He put it squarely up to me, and I did some rapid thinking. Hunkins waited patiently, regarding me with a twinkle in his eyes, and a smile at the corner of his lips. "Take your time," he said. "Consider it fully."

I ran it all over in my mind: the sensation, the effect on the next campaign, the prominence it will give me, the antagonism of Pendergrast and his crowd that will beset me, the possible dangers and the ensuing benefits. I thought: "What is there to lose? Nothing. What is there to gain? A good many things, including a considerable personal prestige; also, the thing must be exposed."

"I suppose," I said, "that if I do not do it some one else will."

"Certainly," Hunkins replied. "You have the first chance; that's all."

"Why not give it to the newspapers?"

"Because we cannot get the direct political benefit, nor make the direct political application—throw it right into the faces of the men who are guilty—that we can by having a party man expose it in a party man-

ner, for the good of the city of course. Pendergrast will be there, on the floor, and it will be fastened to him immediately. The newspapers will be obliged to print the first, and biggest, story with that angle, identifying you with it, and us, too. Otherwise, it will be a newspaper story first with our organization incidental, and Pendergrast will have a chance for defense, for the papers will be sure to see him before they print it if they get it without the initial publicity. I view it as an organization opportunity and duty."

"But I do not belong to your organization."

"Oh, yes you do, until you run out on us. Indirectly, at least, you are one of us, nominated and elected by us, you know."

I thought that over. It is true enough. So long as I am a party man I am an organization man. Of course, I am independent, also, but——

"You are sure that it will help defeat Spearle?" I asked.

"Certain."

"Who will be nominated to oppose him?"

"Now you are trying to make a seer out of me. That depends on conditions at nominating time."

"What will happen if I make the exposure?"

"Where?"

"At the meeting."

"There will be a riot, no doubt."

"What do you mean by that?"

"You wouldn't ask if you knew Pendergrast better. He is a hard, rough, crafty, unscrupulous man, who fought his way up to where he is—or down—with his fists, and such auxiliaries as chairs, bottles, brass

knuckles and pistols. So did some of his followers who are in that board. Naturally, as soon as he realizes what you have in mind he will yell for regular order and move to adjourn to shut you off. Then, if you shoot the main fact out in the first sentence, it will come to him that the beans are all spilled, anyhow, no matter whether they adjourn or not. Naturally, also, his mind, being the sort of a mind it is, will revert to immediate, personal revenge, and he'll start for you to beat you up; and he'll do it, too, if you do not watch out, and his gang will help him. It won't be leader Pendergrast who will be operating then, but Slugger Pendergrast. That's the obverse of it. Ten years ago several of that gang would be carrying pistols. They are slightly more civilized now, and there is no danger of shooting."

"Looks as if it might be an interesting evening, if I do it," I said, and the prospect was rather alluring. Things have been dull since I returned from France. "How will your fellows act?"

"They will be neutral. They won't help you much, but they will not weigh in with Pendergrast, either. That's the best I can promise. I do not dare trust them with the secret. They're all friends, you know. Want to try it?"

I thought it all over again, while Hunkins sat watching me with grave interest. Suddenly, I decided to do it. I don't know why, exactly, but I did.

"Yes," I said. "I'll do it. Can I have that paper?"

"Here is a certified copy. I'll just keep the original in case of accident. I'm glad you will do it. It may be exciting, but it will do good all around. I'll

tell you if anything happens between now and Monday night to make it inadvisable. Meantime, go to it, and thanks for the coöperation."

I turned as I was at the door. "How much of a rough-house do you think will develop?"

"There's no telling. Pendergrast is a hard citizen."

"What preparations should I make?"

"Whatever you think necessary, in view of what I have told you. You are a military man, and a prudent warrior always has the heavier battalions. The strategy of it is up to you. I haven't concealed anything from you. There may be a mix. You're taking that chance."

"All right," I said. "I'll take it."

"You'll not regret it," Hunkins replied, as I went out.

CHAPTER XVI

THE PLAN OF CAMPAIGN

SORRY for Bill Miller, glad for a chance to get after Pendergrast, who I consider the most dangerous man in our politics, and pleasurably excited over the prospect of a real action, I reviewed the situation after I got home and studied the paper Hunkins gave me. It was all there, just as he said, a tabulated statement giving the amounts loaned to the mining company, the dates of the I. O. U.'s, the partners in the enterprise, and such other information as bore on the transactions—a cold, statistical record of the weakness of one man and the villainies of seven. I framed my speech. It is to be short, to the point, and denunciatory to the limit. It is to call for punishment of all the guilty persons. It is to be a model of deliberate diatribe.

My thoughts clung to what Hunkins said as we parted: "You are a military man. Your strategy is in your own hands." What does he mean by that? Going back over the conversation, what he said about there being a fight obtruded. I laid it out. I am to stand up and denounce Pendergrast, who will be there on the floor, surrounded by eleven of his own followers. Cornwell, the presiding officer, will be with him. Charley Elmer, clerk, will be with him;

so will the doorkeepers, and messengers, the police, and other minor officials. At best, I can count only on the support of Cass, Kilmany, and Professor Starkweather, up to his feeble limit. Hunkins' men will be passively with me. I doubt if they will go to the mat on it. Hunkins says Pendergrast will try to stop it, physically if he cannot prevent it by parliamentary objections. Where will I come in?

"You are a military man. Your strategy is in your own hands." By Jove, he means that I shall get in some outside support—soldiers! It is as clear as day. Tommie Dowd! Sure. The very man. I'll see him in the morning. I went to bed and dreamed of a rough-and-tumble fight with Pendergrast that lasted interminably.

It happens that the accountants who made this examination audit Dad's books each year. I know the junior member of the firm, Ernest Plaisted, intimately. At ten o'clock I was at his office.

"Ernest," I told him, "I want a strictly confidential talk with you."

He sent out his secretary, and closed the door. "Fire ahead," he said.

"Is this on the level?" and I handed him the paper Hunkins gave me.

He read it carefully. "It's a correct copy of an original," he said. "Where did you get it?"

"Mr. Hunkins gave it to me. Is it straight?"

"We're not supposed to talk about the business of our clients."

"I know that, but this is more than a client's business. It is the business of every man and woman in

this city who pays city taxes. Besides, there is only one place I could get it, and that is from Hunkins. He gave it to me. I only want one word about it. Is it straight?"

Plaisted did not answer at once. He got up and walked over to the window, drummed a little on the glass with his fingers, lighted a cigar, and wiped his glasses.

"It is important for me to know," I persisted, "and a hundred times as important that the people should know. You will be satisfied with the outcome of it, and you ought to tell me. Is it straight?"

Plaisted turned and said: "Yes, unfortunately it is."

I thanked him, and left for Dowd's office. Dowd was deep in a conference with half a dozen of his soldier friends and I waited impatiently until they left. Then he turned and said: "Bon jour, my bold alderman. How are they coming?"

"Plenty beaucoup," I replied in the soldier manner. "Seen any fighting lately?"

"Not a leaf stirring since I left Mouzon."

"Feel like a little carnage?"

"Ah, oui—oui! Lead me to it. This law business is a dreary and inactive occupation. When and where?"

"Next Monday night at the meeting of the Board of Aldermen."

Dowd jerked himself up in his chair, and looked at me sharply.

"Oh, boy," he said, "but that's an alluring prospect. I've always wanted a chance at that bunch, but I don't get you. Let me have the pleasant details."

I told him the story, from beginning to end, bore down on the possibility of a ruction raised by Pendergrast and his crowd, and handed him the paper.

"How do you know it's true?" he asked, after I had finished and he had read the paper.

"I took it to Ernest Plaisted, and he told me it is."

"That's proof enough. It is if he says so. What's the plot?" He was looking at me with the light of battle in his eyes.

"Just this. If Pendergrast starts anything I want to be protected until I get through. I can't rely much on my party colleagues, and I must arrange for some outside help."

"What sort of outside help?"

"Tommie," I said, "the law has thinned your fighting blood. I mean soldier outside help, of course."

He jumped up. "Sure!" he shouted. "How many?"

"Twenty-five or thirty picked men, I should say."

He had it then. His mind began to work like an eight-cylinder engine.

"Make it thirty; no, fifty will be better. You see, when that gets started, if it does start, Pendergrast's first move will be to call in the police, and they will do what he tells them to. Now, it is up to us to have enough men in the chamber to hold things steady until you are through, and enough men outside to guard the doors to see that nobody slips out to a 'phone. All the 'phones there are in the ante-rooms. The police may get the tip, and we want enough men on hand to make it quick and decisive, for there is no nourishment in fighting the police. They have guns and night-

sticks. A policeman always has the best of it at the first, too, for he has the law behind him, and we'll be bending, if not breaking, that sacred legal institution known as the peace. Still, we'll have to hold the two bulls who usually are on guard there for a few minutes. We can handle two of them, and might make a showing against a platoon, but what's the use? The thing to do is to keep the bystanders herded until you finish, and distribute the men around inside so they can restrain the Pendergrast sluggers for the same length of time. It's a cinch. Want me to help?"

His eyes sparkled, and his hands clenched and unclenched as he talked. He was in it already.

"Want you to help? I want you to handle it. Will you?"

"Will I? Leave it to me, and I'll shove some huskies against that gang that will eat 'em alive if they start anything."

"Don't tip the Miller story off."

"Not a word, but, say, we ought to let Steve Fox in on it."

We did, and had great difficulty in restraining Steve from jumping down the elevator shaft with the story in his anxiety to get it into print.

"Nix on that, Steve," we cautioned. "Not a line until it happens."

"You're fine friends, you are," Steve wailed. "Tell me the biggest story that's broken in this town in a year, and then won't let me print it. Dammit, what did you tell me for?"

"Cheer up, Stevie," Dowd said. "You've got an edge on it, and can have a copy of this paper, and

most of the story written before you come to the meeting."

Steve fought hard, but finally consented to be reasonable. We formed a general staff, consisting of the three of us, and made our plan of campaign.

I had my speech ready by Monday, ten minutes long, condensed to the bare, biting statement of fact. I felt there might be no opportunity for eloquence. I saw Dowd at five o'clock that afternoon. He had fifty men, who were to get to the aldermanic chamber early, half of them to take seats inside, while the other half stood unobtrusively as possible around the corridors, to come up when they get the signal; Dowd in command, with Sergeant Davidson in charge of the outside squad.

Hunkins called me at six o'clock. "Is everything all set?" he asked.

"Yes. Coming over?"

"No, I guess not. Better for me to stay away. You've worked out a plan of defense, I hope."

"Yes. There may be a communique from the front in the papers in the morning."

"May victory perch on your banners. Go to it, and good luck."

The aldermanic chamber is a large, rectangular room on the second floor of the City Hall. There are nineteen desks in the center of the room, with swivel chairs, within a railed enclosure having gates at the end nearest the general entrance. Outside of these rails, on the long sides of the room, are seats, in the form of pews, that will accommodate a hundred people on a side. These seats are occupied on meeting nights

with people who are interested in the affairs of the board, with lawyers who practice in the City Hall, and the general riff-raff that frequents such places—sitters who want a place to rest more than anything else—and some regulars who are on hand every Monday night and write letters to the papers expressing approval or disapproval of the acts of the aldermen.

When there is anything important on there is likely to be an audience that fills all the seats, but on ordinary nights there will not be more than fifty or seventy-five men and women there, all told. A policeman generally stands at the gate opening to the aldermanic enclosure to keep too persistent local lobbyists outside, and preserve the dignity of the meetings; and another policeman is stationed in the corridor.

The desk of the presiding officer is at the far end of the room, on a raised platform, and flanked by the desk of the city clerk, who is the official recorder of the sessions. There are desks for two or three other clerks and officials, and just below these are the six desks for the newspaper reporters. The presiding official, the clerks and the reporters sit facing the entrance door and the aldermen with their backs to it, and facing the presiding officer. There are several committee rooms and ante-rooms outside, and a door behind the desk of the presiding officer that leads to his private room.

Aldermanic meetings begin at seven o'clock, making it necessary to have our men there before that time. Dowd assembled them at the Tucker Building offices at six o'clock. They arrived promptly, lusting for the fray. The plan of campaign sent half of them into

the chamber, in twos and threes, to take seats on opposite sides, each group separated from each other group so that no suspicion may be aroused over their presence; the other half to remain outside, in the corridors, with instructions to rush up to the main entrance and go where Davidson tells them to, after they hear his whistle.

At half past six Dowd telephoned to me that they were all on their joyful way, strictly cautioned that they must start nothing until the word is passed.

"They understand, and are ready," he said. "You need fear nothing except a riot call for the whole police force. If they get that over we'll have to make a getaway, for I am not in favor of going against that outfit of cops unless it is more important than I think it is. I've told them to lay off the police."

"They are not taking pistols, I hope," I said, knowing that those young men have no ideas about a fight save that the only proper finish for one is victory, and have recently been to a war where victory was obtained by their use of various implements of offense, with which they are quite familiar.

"No; there isn't a gat on them. I made sure of that, however——"

"However what?"

"I did find a few billies, and I hadn't the heart to take those away from them."

CHAPTER XVII

WE GIVE BATTLE

I NOTICED a number of erect, sturdy-looking men in the corridors on my way to the aldermanic chamber, and saw Dowd sitting in a front seat, on the left hand side, reading an evening paper as I went to my desk. The usual number of spectators for a routine night were there, including half a dozen women, and scattered among them were various clean-shaven, browned, husky young persons who were watching the gathering statesmen on the floor with active interest.

"Rush her," I heard Pendergrast say to Cornwell. "There's nothing on, and I'm in a hurry."

The meeting was called to order a minute or two past seven by Cornwell. Charley Elmer hustled through the journal of the previous meeting and the routine reports of committees and such similar business. In half an hour we had reached the head of: "New and unfinished business."

"Any unfinished business?" Cornwell asked, and a member made a brief statement about a pending ordinance.

"New business," ordered Cornwell, briskly, not expecting any. That was my cue. I rose precipitately. My heart beat rapidly, and my throat felt dry and raspy. Pendergrast, who sits on the opposite side of

the center aisle from me, and in the front row while I am in the fourth, heard me, and turned to see who was interfering with his programme for a rush meeting.

"Mr. President," I said, in a voice that sounded far away and strained. Dowd was leaning forward, with both hands on the railing, as if ready to vault, and looking at me intently. The soldiers were all watching Dowd, who nodded at me and smiled reassuringly.

"The gentleman from the Second," said Cornwell, sharply, as if annoyed that I should be delaying proceedings by any futile remarks of mine when Pendergrast, the boss, desired expedition.

I drew a long breath, steadied myself, and was about to take the plunge when Pendergrast jumped up and asked: "Mr. President, may I inquire for what purpose the gentleman from the Second rises?"

Cornwell is a good presiding officer. He took his cue instantly. Pendergrast remained standing while Cornwell asked: "Will the gentleman from the Second state his purpose?"

"I rise under the head of new business," I replied, "in my capacity as a member of this body, and I have an important statement to make under that head."

Contempt for me and anger over the delay were in Pendergrast's "Huh!" as he dropped into his chair.

"Mr. President," I repeated, in better voice, stepping into the aisle and stiffening myself, "there is a shortage in the city treasury of \$156,000!"

Instantly Pendergrast was on his feet again. "Mr. President," he cried, "I object! This is an unwarranted and libelous statement! I deny its truth. I call for the regular order."

"Motion to adjourn in order," announced Cornwell, hurriedly.

"I protest!" I shouted. "I cannot be taken off my feet in this manner. I repeat, there is a shortage of \$156,000 in the city treasury. I——"

Pendergrast was standing in the aisle, glaring at me, his red and brutal face malignly contorted, his lips working, his fingers twisting.

"Move we adjourn!" he shouted.

"You can't adjourn until I finish!" I screamed, but the Pendergrast men immediately began to chorus: "Adjourn! Adjourn!" Cornwell pounded on his desk with the gavel. Nearly everybody was on his feet. Dowd was leaning forward, watching Pendergrast, who had taken a step towards me.

I raised my voice to its uttermost volume, and shouted: "Miller, the treasurer, is a defaulter!"

"I deny it!" Pendergrast shouted in return. "It's a political lie! Miller is straight!"

Pendergrast was within three feet of me then, his head pushed forward, his chin protruding, his lips compressed, and his eyes so contracted that only the pupils showed. I was conscious of nothing but that red and anger-distorted face, not far from mine. I forgot my speech, forgot everything but Pendergrast, and I threw out my hand at him, and screamed: "Furthermore, this man, Pendergrast, got the most of the money!"

"Shut up!" yelled Pendergrast. "You lie! Shut up, or I'll make you!"

He struck at me, caught me on the chest, throwing me off my balance for a moment. I hit back at him.

As he rushed in at me to grapple me, I heard shouts of: "Throw him out! Throw him out!" and then, the loud, clear command of Dowd:

"All right, boys; let's go!"

The soldiers pushed aside the excited spectators, and sprung over the backs of the seats into the enclosure. I heard a whistle outside, and the slamming of a door. Dowd leaped on a desk, and gave his orders.

"Grab that guy there, and shove him back in his seat!" He pointed to Pendergrast. Three soldiers took that struggling, profane boss, and threw him across his desk.

"Hold that one where he is!" He pointed to Cornwell, and three soldiers pinioned that astonished presiding officer to his chair.

"Stop that guy!" Charley Elmer had started for a side door. He was hauled back.

"Push in the faces of this other mob if they won't sit down." Dowd meant the Pendergrast supporters, who were milling about ineffectively, and screaming: "Adjourn! Adjourn!"

"Sit down! Sit down!" ordered the soldiers, and then shoved the Pendergrast men into such chairs as were vacant. The Hunkins men stood intensely interested, but taking no part except to answer the cries of the Pendergrast men for adjournment with a cadenced clamor of "No! No! No!"

Held to his chair, Pendergrast roared inarticulate curses and threats at me, struggling fiercely with the soldiers. One of them put a big hand over Pender-

grast's mouth. "Cheese it," he ordered, "or I'll shut off your wind."

"Meeting's adjourned!" Cornwell repeated at quick intervals. "Meeting's adjourned! All out! Meeting's adjourned!"

"Not yet!" shouted Dowd. "Meeting's still going on!"

Meantime, Charley Elmer was fighting like a fat wild cat, and another soldier ran over to assist the two who held him. They threw Charley to the floor, and sat on him. Pendergrast pushed the soldier's hand from his mouth and shouted: "Kill him! Kill the ——!" He made a tremendous effort, broke away, and rushed at me. That gave courage to his supporters, and they surged up at the soldiers. I found myself in a grapple with Pendergrast, who was beating at my face with his hairy fist. I half turned, swung on him, and missed his face, but hit his fat neck. Dowd jumped from the desk on which he was standing, caught Pendergrast by the shoulders, pulled him away, and with one mighty shove sent him sprawling across his own desk again, where he was held by four men.

I got a confused impression of the rest of it. The Hunkins men had moved over against the rail, still chorusing their noes. Kilmany had Tony Milano bent over a desk and was beating him in the face and shouting Gaelic battle cries to the accompaniment of many Neapolitan oaths from that suffering and outraged padrone. The Professor was in a corner wringing his hands and exclaiming: "Oh, tut-tut; tut-tut-tut!" Each Pendergrast man was in the clutches of a soldier

who lusted for warfare, and there were ten separate and meritorious fights in progress inside those rails. Half a dozen of the soldiers were at the rear of the room, holding the messengers and others in check, and the policeman, who guards the gate, was contemplating the scene hysterically and profanely from the embracing arms of three of our men, who held him, but had to labor mightily to do it.

There was a wild confusion of curses, shouts and the grunts and imprecations of straining, fighting men. Pendergrast had collapsed from his exertions, and lay limply over his desk. Cornwell had laid out a soldier with the gavel, and freed his right hand. He was hammering and shouting: "Meeting's adjourned! Meeting's adjourned!"

The reporters, including Steve Fox, were the only calm persons in the room, for even the spectators had joined in the clamor. The reporters stood on their desks, commenting to one another on the row, and making notes, now and then, of what they saw.

Dowd rushed back to me. "Finish your speech!" he yelled in my ear. "They may get the police here any minute!"

I clambered on a desk, and shouted out my facts. I had forgotten what I had prepared, and what I gave forth was a series of whoops and screeches:

"Shortage in sinking fund—Miller defaulter—Pendergrast and his gang got the money—seven of them—Miller didn't steal a cent—they stole it—Pendergrast got \$47,000—Larrimore got \$32,000—trying to cover it up—can't do it—demand investigation—outrage on city that thieves like this are out of jail—Pendergrast

chief robber—all culpable—have the proof—straight goods—”

At that moment a Pendergrast man freed himself from his captors, grabbed my legs and pulled me off the desk. I fell on top of him, and for a short space, had no interest in the proceedings other than to keep my colleague from gouging out one of my eyes. We rolled and fought over the floor. He was most persistent in his attempt to eliminate that eye. I hit him in the face as hard as I could, and as often, but he only snorted, and kept digging for my eye.

“Hold him a minute!” I dimly heard Dowd say. He ran past me. I heard a loud cry at the door. “Ten men in here, quick!” Then, a moment later, the eye-seeker was pulled from my embrace, and I staggered up, a dusty, disheveled, bleeding young crusader against corrupt politics.

The reinforcements made the work of quieting down the Pendergrast followers quick and effective. They jammed them in their chairs. I shook my fist at Cornwell, then under complete restraint, and shouted: “Now, damn you, adjourn if you want to!”

The boys had not been any too careful in their dealings with Cornwell. When he was released he croaked again: “Meeting’s adjourned.” Pendergrast was exhausted. Fat and liquor operated against him, although his spirit was still undaunted and his anger malignant. “Kill you for this!” he gasped at me. “Kill you, sure’s my name’s Pendergrast.”

Davidson ran into the room from the corridor, and blew his whistle. Every soldier let go what he was holding, and turned towards him.

"Police coming!" shouted Davidson. "Beat it!"

"Beat it!" echoed Dowd.

The soldiers broke away, rushed for the door, and disappeared in the corridor. I hurried to the reporters and gave them copies of the statement of the accountants, and of the speech I intended to deliver.

"Give us an interview," they insisted.

"Nothing more to say," I spluttered at them, still breathing hard from my tangle on the floor, and somewhat concerned over a nose that bled profusely, and a rapidly closing eye.

"Come on, Talbot!" Dowd shouted, and I ran out and joined him and Davidson in the corridor, leaving the aldermanic chamber occupied by thirty or forty spectators so excited they had difficulty in making comment on the situation of apter bearing than: "Well, what the hell do you know about that?"

The Hunkins men followed me out, excited, too, but virtuous withal. They had acted decorously as interested and innocent bystanders, and were conscious of exceeding rectitude. Kilmany caught up with us and reproached me bitterly for not telling him about it in advance. "I'd brought my bit of blackthorn if I thought there'd be anything so interestin'," he said, "but, at that, I clouted that rapsallion Tony Milano a few that was comin' to him."

"How did the police get wise?" asked Dowd of Davidson.

"I dunno. I had men at every door and at every telephone booth. Some one got out, but it's all right. We've made our getaway. I had the tip from Mike McDermott, who served with me and is back on the

force. He is the outside man to-night, and didn't bother any for the sake of old times. He told me to beat it."

Dowd passed the word for the men to scatter, and they vanished through every door on the main floor, which let them out quickly, as our City Hall stands in a square by itself and has four large entrances. We went out the door leading to Main Street. As we walked down the steps two patrol automobiles came clanging up and a dozen policemen jumped out of each, and started in on the double quick, with Lieutenant Pat Bristol leading. Dowd pushed me into a shadow so my blood-smeared face would not be seen, and shouted at Bristol: "Hello, Paddy! What's up?"

"Riot in aldermen's rooms. Heard anything about it?"

"Not a thing," Dowd replied, blandly, and he hustled me into a taxi-cab, standing at the curb, gave the driver my home address, and got in with me.

"Well," he said, "we put that over without heavy casualties; but Pendergrast would have plugged you if he had had a gun. Who is the gent who tapped you on the beak?"

I laughed. Tommie reverted to type in the fight. He was a sergeant of the A. E. F. then, not a lawyer.

"Masters, I think."

"Masters? He's a bar-room scrapper. Wonder he didn't gouge you."

"He tried," I said, "and I had a devil of a time keeping him from succeeding."

"Masters comes from my ward," said Tommie, "and he has an ugly thumb. One twist, if he gets his

location right, and you're shy an eye forever after. Pleasant party to mix with, Masters is."

"Anybody get you?" I asked.

"Oh, Skidmore beaned me once. It doesn't amount to much, and I slammed him one that he won't forget before morning."

"Well," I said, "what's the net result?"

"More publicity than rival circuses playing the same date. The newspapers will be full of it. You'll get credit for spilling it. Pendergrast will try to start something by having us arrested, but that won't amount to anything. Miller will break down and confess, and Hunkins will probably elect his mayor next fall."

"I'm sorry for Miller," I said.

"So am I, but he'll have to take what is coming. These other fellows probably will get off, especially if they refund, which they will do now, somehow."

I couldn't get easy-going, soft-hearted, vain Miller out of my mind.

"It's a tough game, politics," I said.

"It is," assented Dowd, "when you play it with tough people."

"That's what Hunkins says."

"Well, Hunkins knows."

Dowd bade me good-by at the door, telling me to call for him immediately if I am served with a warrant. "Hope you will be," he said, "now that you are into it. The longer we can keep this thing stirred up the better it will be for the success of it. Good night. Glad none of your lady friends will see you with that battle-scarred map on you."

Dad was in his little room. "Hello, George!" he called. "Come in a minute, will you?"

I went in. Dad looked at me and laughed. "What have you been doing?" he asked. "Cleaning up a bar-room?"

"Not exactly. I've been cleaning up Tom Pendergrast and his gang."

"Well," he said, "judging from appearances, they protested to some effect against your endeavors. Tell me about it."

"Wait until I put something on this eye." I went upstairs, washed the blood from my face, doctored my eye, and brushed the dust from my clothes. Then I came down and told Dad the whole story, omitting no detail either of preliminary, action or language.

As I finished he said: "Well, I'll be darned! To think that you should fall into a rich and juicy rumpus like that. I haven't had a time like that since the mugwumps tried to get a Blaine convention to adopt resolutions endorsing Cleveland. Why didn't you give me a chance to see it?"

"Oh, I thought I wouldn't tell you until after it was over. I didn't know how you'd feel about it."

"Feel about it? If you hadn't done it I'd have disowned you, and if you let them bluff you, now you have done it, I'll do worse than that."

I had three personal telephone calls before I went to bed, and a dozen or so from the newspapers, wanting interviews and detail. I told all the newspapers I had nothing further to say. The last call was from Steve Fox.

"We've got a nine-column spread on it," Steve re-

ported, "with a seven-column, two-line head on the first page, and a three-column cut of you. Your speech and the statement are in bold face in a box on the first page, also, and an interview with Pendergrast in which he calls you seventy-seven different kinds of a liar, and says you will be arrested and sent to prison for life for libel, treason, interfering with public business, rioting, arson, attempted murder, and various other high crimes and misdemeanors. The artist has a bully picture of the scrap. Miller can't be found, but the boss has written a screamer of an editorial, triple leaded, calling for his immediate arrest, denouncing Pendergrast and the others as equally culpable, and calling you a grand young man. The other morning rag is doing about the same, except that it casts doubt on it, and calls for the facts as based on examination, and not on your statement and plays up Pendergrast's denial. They reserve comment on you, as an insect not yet classified, so Arthur Brinker just 'phoned me."

The second call was from Hunkins. "I understand a pleasant time was had," he said. "Just wanted to assure you that I have all the details, and congratulate you on a good job. Don't worry about Pendergrast. He'll have so much trouble of his own by to-morrow night that he'll forget all about you. It is great. I'll want to talk to you to-morrow. We're off to a flying start."

The first call was from Miss Crawford. "I was there," she said, "and saw it all. Mr. Dowd told me about it this afternoon, and I put on a black dress and a veil, and went in the capacity of a widow who wants a street assessment cancelled, or something like

that. I sat over in a corner, and shouted as loudly as anybody for your side. Weren't the soldiers fine? I congratulate you."

That made me forget my sore nose.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE STRATEGY OF HUNKINS

NEXT morning early I telephoned to Charley Adkins, who is the head barber at the Athletic Club and an artist at eye camouflage. He came to the house at eight o'clock to restore my eye to a passable semblance of its former pristine beauty. Hot compresses reduced my nose to an approximation of its usual shape, color and size. While Charley worked I read the papers as well as I could with one eye. Indeed, I only needed half an eye, for the front pages of the *News* and the *Globe* had little else on them.

The *News* treated the charges as substantiated. My picture, in my captain's uniform, stuck out of the page at me like a lighthouse in a fog. The line under it was: "Captain George Talbot, the patriotic young Alderman from the Second Ward, who made the exposure."

"Hold still!" said Charley, after I had read that. I was swelling some. My speech and the statement of the accountants were in bold face type, in a box, and as I read that speech I swelled some more, much to the disgust of Charley, who stopped and said: "Darn it, if you don't keep still I'll never get this lamp of yours fixed." It wasn't the speech I made, of course,

but the speech I intended to make. After reading that masterly effort three or four times I ran my good eye over what Steve had written.

Steve's story was a graphic, three-column recital of the whole affair, from beginning to end, done in short paragraphs, tersely, and vividly. I was right back in it as I read, for Steve is a good reporter. Then I read the editorial, a smashing denunciation of Pendergrast and his gang, calling for their immediate arrest and punishment. Miller was treated as a weak tool. There was a lot of information about the treasury, statistics about the various funds, a rehash of the doings of the Spearle administration, a short biography of myself, and various other explanatory and contributory sections. In all, it filled ten columns. I felt important and righteous after I looked it all over.

Then I took the *Globe*, and the importance and righteousness began to seep out of me. My picture was on the first page of that paper, also, but it was not three columns wide. It was a scant one-column inset in the bottom of a picture of Pendergrast that had the three-column splurge. The caption for Pendergrast was: "Thomas Pendergrast, the assailed leader who categorically denies the truth of the statements made;" and my caption read: "Talbot, who made the charge."

My speech and the statement of the accountants were on the first page, but in ordinary body type, and the *Globe's* display was for the interview with Pendergrast who began by saying that I am a liar, a perjurer, a political tool of Hunkins, a weak-minded boy led into

this by designing politicians who are curs and cowards too crafty to make the charge themselves, and utilized my congenital idiocy, lack of political knowledge and general pathetic inexperience of city affairs to make me the stalking horse in this unparalleled outrage against honest and patriotic citizens; and gradually worked up to some real, fancy denunciation. Pendergrast denied, called on high Heaven to witness the falsity of the charge, demanded an instant investigation, and asserted his own innocence in every paragraph.

He closed with a few further reflections on myself tending to prove that I should be interned, permanently, in an asylum, and expressed great regret that I had so hideously brought dishonor on the revered name of my father, John J. Talbot, a respected and high-minded citizen; and, as a postscript, remarked that immediate steps will be taken to jail myself and my fellow ruffians. Later, Steve Fox told me that Arthur Brinker, of the *Globe*, wrote the interview for Pendergrast. I bow to Arthur. He knows how to call a person out of his name.

Charley Adkins had great difficulty in operating while I read that. My good eye saw red. I hustled Adkins through and was about to rush out to slay Pendergrast when Kinsley, stationed at the telephone to tell everybody I am out, came into the room. Kinsley was my mess sergeant in France, a handy man, and now works in our garage. "Captain," he said, "there's one guy who won't stand for the usual song-and-dance. Says his name is Hunkins, and wants to talk to you, immediate." I went to the telephone.

"Good morning, Captain," I heard. "This is Hun-

kins. Suppose you've seen the papers. We've started well, anyhow. What I want to advise is this: Please do not talk to any person for publication to-day. Don't say a word. Let it stand as it is. I have particular reasons for this which I'll explain if you will come around to my house at five o'clock this afternoon."

"What about that Pendergrast attack on me?"

"Let him rave. When you've been in politics a little longer you won't mind stuff like that. Besides, he's only making it worse for himself. See you at five, I hope."

"All right," I said, "I'll be there, but I really should make Pendergrast take this stuff back."

"Forget it. It's all in the game."

I wasn't quite so sure about that, and decided I'd go down and have a talk with Dowd. I found him reading the papers.

"Hello, Captain," he greeted me. "I see by the *News* that we are champions of pure politics and by the *Globe* that we are criminals of the deepest dye. Otherwise, what's the good word?"

"That's what I came to ask you."

"Paddy Bristol the policeman was in to see me this morning. Paddy and I are old friends. He says the talk around the City Hall is that the whole lot of us, but principally you and I, are to be arrested presently on the charge of violating the sanctity of aldermanic proceedings, or something heinous like that. He tells me the police are out now trying to get the names of the boys. Heard from Hunkins?"

"Yes. He advised me to say nothing to-day, and

asked me to come around to see him at five o'clock this afternoon."

"That's all right. Give the afternoon papers a chance to go to it."

"How will they handle it?"

"Same way. The *Times* will support us, and the *Dispatch* will play up the Pendergrast end of it. The *Journal* will bang both sides and yell for a socialistic government. I suppose they will force a denial from Miller, and I'll bet Pendergrast spent all of last night trying to get that money together. Suppose Hunkins has anything further?"

"I don't know. That's all he showed me."

"Well, that's enough. Stick around until the noon editions come out."

"But what about that Pendergrast attack on me?"

"Let it ride. It isn't hurting you any, and it probably will have a frightful kick-back before we're through. I am no particular champion of Hunkins, but he didn't go into this not knowing what he is doing. That's a cinch."

The noon editions, which came out at half past ten, took up the story avidly. As Dowd predicted, the *Times* story was along *News* lines, and the *Dispatch* had a new and more violent interview with Pendergrast. It also developed that the two senior members of the firm of accountants, Brooks and Hubbell, are fishing at Miami, and that Ernest Plaisted refused to comment in any way on the findings of the firm beyond stating that I had quoted them correctly, and that the firm had made the investigation, with the results as shown. Pendergrast intimated, in his afternoon

interview, that the accountants had been "reached." The *Journal* said everybody concerned is a villain and a traitor to the best interests of the people, and demanded that all of us shall be turned out and socialists installed.

The main feature of the spreads in the noon editions of the afternoon papers was a brief denial from Miller, who was found at the city treasurer's office at seven o'clock in the morning, very nervous and shaken, in consultation with Pendergrast. He gave out his statement in typewritten form, and refused to say anything further. Miller said: "The story is manufactured from whole cloth. All funds are intact. I demand an investigation." That was all.

"Sit tight," advised Dowd, as I left. "If they arrest you get in touch with me immediately. I'll see you to-night after you've talked with Hunkins."

I went up to Dad's office and found him deep in the *News*. "Guess I'm wrong about this paper," he said, "Seems to be quite a sheet. I think I'll subscribe for it again."

I told Dad what Dowd said about the possibility of arrest, and of my engagement with Hunkins.

"Don't let that arrest business bother you," said Dad. "Miller will be in jail before to-morrow night. I know that firm of Brooks, Hubbell and Plaisted, and if they say there's a shortage in the city treasury, after they have examined the books, I'll bet my life there is a shortage, and exactly as much as they set down, to the cent. How's your eye?"

"All right. I had it patched up a little. Coming out to lunch?"

I felt like smashing him, but I restrained myself and said, pleasantly as my choking anger would allow: "I'm whatever you are not, Fred. If that's a regular mucker, so be it."

"No accounting for tastes," he commented, as he walked away.

"By heck," said Dad, "it will take a soviet to jolt this crowd out of the smug appreciation of their own superiority."

The final editions of the afternoon papers, which came on the streets at half past four, contained a revised and more forceful denial from Miller, and the first intimation from Pendergrast that action might be taken against the accountants.

"What do you make of it?" I asked Dowd, over the telephone.

"Looks to me as if they had scraped the money together to cover," he answered, "but that makes no difference. I'm still banking on Hunkins. Haven't been arrested yet, have you?"

"Not yet."

"Neither have I, but Davidson tells me the police captain of his precinct sweated him an hour this morning for the names of the boys."

"Did he tell them?"

"Sure; after the proper amount of hesitation to impress the police; why not? They will never be pinched. I'm certain of that."

When I reached Hunkins's house, at five o'clock, I found Steve Fox there.

"I asked Steve to come over because what I am go-

ing to tell you concerns him, also. How are you feeling?"

"All right. I don't understand this gradual increase in confidence by Pendergrast, though."

"They're bluffing. They think we've fired all our ammunition."

"Haven't we?"

Hunkins laughed. "We have not," he said. "What happened last night was merely the preliminary barrage."

"I don't understand," I said, and I could see Steve's eyes glisten in anticipation.

"You, as a soldier, wouldn't think very highly of a general who attacked with his full strength and held no reserves ready, would you?"

"Not much."

"Then, if you will pardon my assumption, for a moment, of the position of general in this enterprise, I have some reserves."

"What?" exclaimed Steve and I, together.

Hunkins pulled out a drawer of his desk, and took from it half a dozen photographs. "These," he said, handing the photographs to us.

We looked at the pictures eagerly. They were photographs of the I. O. U.'s given by several of the men who got the money from Miller. There was one that was dated two years back, and was in the sprawly handwriting of Pendergrast. "I. O. U. \$23,000." The signature was "Thos. Pendergrast," and below, written in the same hand, was "To William Miller." The others were for various amounts, and were signed

by four of the seven men implicated in the transactions.

"How did you get these?" I asked, excitedly, while Steve gloated over them, whistling softly between his teeth.

"Well," said Hunkins, "I guess you ought to know, and I'll tell you, but it is for your own information. It was a hard job, for Miller kept the originals in a private compartment in a private safe in the treasury, and with them he kept a private ledger carrying the details of these transactions. We took the precaution to photograph a page or two of the ledger also."

Hunkins reached into the drawer again, and brought out two more photographs palpably of pages of a ledger or account book, and debiting Pendergrast, Larrimore, Skidmore and the rest with various sums.

"Great!" I exclaimed. "Now we've got them."

"We've had them all the time," corrected Hunkins, mildly. "But to return to the photographs. While this money was borrowed for a company exploitation of a mine in Arizona it is evident that Miller insisted on personal obligations as well as the company obligation. He refused to give up unless each member individually pledged himself for whatever share he carried. Hence, we have the goods on them, personally.

"Miller is an easy-going, lazy man, and that fact was our great aid. It was well enough known about the office that he never went to the pains of learning the combinations of the safes. The big one is a time-lock, and when it is shut it is shut for keeps. So far as the general books are concerned, our friend found a way to hold them one night when he worked late over

a Saturday and Sunday. That was easy enough, for when we had the lead pointed out to us we found the crooked figures without difficulty. Then the problem was to get the personal evidence which we knew existed because my friend in the office got a glimpse at it one day when Miller was examining it. That was a stumper, for it was in the private safe, and Miller carried the combination for that. Of course, we might have blown it open. I have a friend or two who are experts in that line, but that was not to be considered. So it took some work of which I am not particularly proud, but that I excuse on the ground of necessity.

"The lazy-minded Miller has these combinations written down in a little book, which he carries in his wallet. Every time he opened the safe he consulted that book. Foolish of him, but our salvation. If he had carried the combinations in his head we would have been beaten. Anyhow, without going into details, we got that book and had it long enough to copy the combinations. After that it was simply a job of fitting the combinations to the private safe. When Miller was out of town one night, a handy friend from the burglar protection company did a few things to the burglar alarms, and we got the stuff, took it to a photographer, had it photographed, hustled it back, closed the safe, fixed the alarms, and here it is. Do you think you have influence enough in the *News* office to have these photographs reproduced on the first page in the morning, Steve?"

"Do I?" said Steve. "I can get them reproduced on sixteen pages; but, say——"

"What is it?"

"You are not giving these to the *Globe*, are you?"

"I am not. They're yours, exclusively. We'll let the *Globe* wallow in it once more. Undoubtedly, owing to the fact that Talbot has said nothing further, and, I presume, because they may have refunded at least a part of the money, they think they can bluff it out, and I look to see Brother Pendergrast come to bat again in the morning with further protestations of his great rectitude. I'd like to hold them off a day or so more, but don't think that expedient. We'll just smash them with these in the morning, and take my word for it, Miller won't stand the gaff and will be wailing out a confession before noon, and Pendergrast will be up the tallest tree he has ever been up in his crafty career."

CHAPTER XIX

PERKINS NEEDS \$40,000

THE way Steve spread those pictures of the I. O. U.'s and of the two pages of the private ledger over the front page of the *News* was a marvel of effective newspaper display. They were across the top, down the middle, across the bottom and in the corners, and with them such type as there was room for, calling attention to their condemnatory proof of the fact that Miller had given out this city money, and that Pendergrast and his friends had taken it.

"GUILT OF GANG PROVED BY THEIR OWN SIGNATURES!"

ran in two heavy, black lines across the top of the page, and there was another graphic, detailed story by Steve. No mention was made of how the photographs were secured. Hunkins asked that. There they were, however, and they proved everything I charged. There was another picture of me, this time on the second page, and only two columns wide, but the editorial article again called attention to my great public service and said the ends justify the means, "for there is now an opportunity to clean this gang out of the City Hall which it has infested far too long to the

detriment of good government and the real interests of the city."

The *Globe* story was pathetic. It combined all the various statements of Pendergrast into one sweeping denial, reprinted all he said of me in a separate box, played up Miller's final denial, and shouted editorially: "It is all a political trick and lie concocted by the unscrupulous opposition to discredit the city administration on the eve of a campaign. We demand a full and impartial investigation, not only in justice to those cruelly maligned public officials, the Honorable William Miller and the Honorable Thomas Pendergrast, but, also, that the entire city administration, which has faithfully administered to its trust, shall be shown as it is, honest, diligent and impeccable."

Miller broke down, in the mayor's office, at ten o'clock that morning and confessed; whereupon, Mayor Spearle ordered his instant arrest and issued a long statement in which the following phrases occurred: "No guilty man shall escape—hew to the line let the chips fall where they will—no stigma attaches to my office—deeply deplore fall of Treasurer Miller—view with apprehension and dismay actions of Pendergrast and others—rigid investigation—fix the guilt—blot on city's fair escutcheon—wipe out the blot by continuation present efficient and honest administration in all other offices—accepted resignation of Miller—justice shall be done e'en though the heavens fall—cold, implacable justice, and every guilty man shall receive full meed of punishment."

"I got up early," Steve told me, that afternoon, "and went over to the City Hall. I got the tip there

was something doing in the mayor's office and jammed in there just before Miller came in. I know Miller, and like him. So does everybody else. It was piteous. They brought Miller in through a rear door, and led him in front of Spearle, who sat at his desk trying to look the incarnation of stern justice. Miller's chief deputy came with him, and his father, a respectable old man who runs a box factory out in the Eleventh Ward. Miller's vanity stuck with him. He had on his best clothes, but he looked as if he had not slept since the story broke. His big, good-natured face was white, and he was sweating great drops. They ran down his forehead and splashed on his cheeks. His loose lips sucked in and out, and his pudgy little chin trembled like a baby's after a spanking. It was all over in three minutes. 'It's true,' sobbed Miller. 'I can't stand the strain any longer. I gave them the money. They said they'd pay back. I trusted them. It's all square now. They paid it back this morning, but they lied before. They didn't keep their promises, and they were friends of mine. I—I——'

"'Officer,' said Spearle, 'do your duty,' and they led the sobbing man away supported by his father. Then Spearle handed out his statement. I'm damned if he hadn't prepared two; one in case of innocence and one for guilt. Speaking about tight-rope walkers—that gent's a Blondin."

Steve told me that Hunkins wanted to see us again at five o'clock, and we went over, wondering what he might have to say. "I don't see what else he can have, do you?" I asked Steve.

"You never can tell about Hunkins," Steve replied.

"He is an intelligent and resourceful person, and rarely lays all his cards on the table at once."

"What is his history?" I asked. "I've asked a lot of people, but nobody seems to know much about him except that he is boss, and has been since Andrew Bruce died. He seems to be taken for granted, just there, like the South Street bridge."

"He's a natural development," Steve told me as we walked towards Martin Street, "a boss by inheritance. Old Andrew Bruce left the job to him in his political last will and testament, and Hunkins fought off all the other heirs expectant who contested the will, as several did, established his claim to the property, and proved his rights by his brains and works."

"His father, C. J. Hunkins, kept a book store in the old days. He was an Englishman, born there, and a classicist, one of those chaps who had their Latin whacked into them at an early age and never forgot it. The book-store was the loafing place for men who had tastes like Hunkins, and one of these was Bruce. Bruce was a boss, none harder-headed nor harder fisted, but he, also, was a worshiper of Robert Burns. He wanted to fight any person who intimated that Burns is not the greatest poet the world ever has produced, or ever will produce. Hunkins held different views. He maintained that the only great poets are the classical poets, Virgil, Homer, and especially Horace, which is where our Hunkins got his Horatian slant. These two old cronies wrangled over this subject for twenty years, and all the time young Hunkins was growing up, with free range of the book store, a bookish trend and a flair for languages."

"Old Bruce got to know and like the boy, who was being educated on a system of his father's. He had to study Latin when he was a child, taught by the old man himself, and by the time he was twenty he was a good classical scholar, and had a High-school education, also. Bruce began to give the lad little jobs in politics, and, presently, young Billy, who had a taste for politics, developed into right-hand executive for the old chap. Then, one day, Bruce died, and Hunkins stepped in and took hold. His father left enough property, in houses and lots, to give him about four thousand dollars a year income, which is enough for him as he isn't married, and he sits there in Martin Street and gets joy out of life by playing politics, reading books, and studying languages. He has French and Italian and German, but I didn't know until the other day when you told me, that he's taken up Spanish recently.

"Hunkins plays the game on the theory that it is results that count, and the way to get results is to get them. He's cold as a wedge in politics, and there's nothing high-brow or idealistic about him. He plays with the cards dealt to him, and as you know the *News* doesn't stand for all he does, by a long shot. However, we are good friends, and he talks freely to me about many of his plans, knowing that I'll slam him if I think he needs slamming, and never trying to tie me up by making confidential communications that I can't use. We're on a square-toed basis, as witness his telling me, and you, too, how he got those I. O. U.'s to photograph. He's a frank citizen if he trusts you. Here we are."

Hunkins greeted us with great good nature, much pleased and showing it. "We've got them," he said, "got them where the hair is short. Seems a shame to pile it on, but I think we might take one more shot at them, especially at this trimmer, Spearle."

He had a clipping of Mayor Spearle's statement, and walked about the room declaiming portions of it, especially the line about: "No stigma attaches to my office."

"Is Spearle in it?" Steve asked, excitedly.

"No; I'm sorry to say, he isn't, but we can tie it up to his office."

"How?"

"Why, there are eight men in that mining syndicate that borrowed the money from Miller. The eighth man doesn't appear openly. Pendergrast carried him, and covered his part of it in the part he assumed personally."

"Who is it?"

"Wallace, the Mayor's executive clerk. There was a note in Miller's private ledger to that effect. Meticulous person, Miller, wrote everything down. I haven't any photograph of that, but I saw it, and you may use it in the morning if you like, Steve. No doubt Miller will confirm it, now that he has peached."

"I'll go and see," said Steve, hurrying out.

"Well," said Hunkins, "this has been a good job, well done, and I'm grateful to you for helping me carry it out. I shall not forget. However, as Horace says, we must in good fortune preserve our minds from an insolent joy, and the thing to do now is intelligently

and skillfully to capitalize it and make it of use to us in the campaign for mayor that is coming."

We discussed various city affairs and politics for half an hour or so and then Steve called up.

"I got to Miller in the city attorney's office," he said, "and he confirmed it. He's in a frightful funk, and is spilling all he knows. They tried to stop him on this, but he let it go, and I'm printing it in the morning."

"Fine!" said Hunkins. "Just a little stigma for Mayor Spearle—just enough to make it more difficult for him in the primaries."

Steve's publication about Wallace caused Mayor Spearle to turn the most amazing series of flip-flops witnessed up to that time in the office of the city's chief executive. He suspended Wallace, issued several statements protesting his entire lack of knowledge of the matter, personally instructed the city attorney to have no mercy on Miller but hale him before the Grand Jury at the earliest moment, set forth some burning remarks about Pendergrast, and recalled them before the reporters got out of the room, and wound up the day by holding a conference of his friends, and formally declaring himself at the head of the party. He discharged Pendergrast without a character.

Pendergrast tried to bluff it out for a day or two, but the going was too heavy for him. Even the *Globe* attacked him and his partners in the borrowing episode. Then he put his affairs in the hands of our best criminal lawyer, and left town one night without giving an address. There was a long, legal wrangle over the exact shade of culpability of the

men who borrowed the money, which they repaid, of course, after the exposure. This dragged on for weeks, and, finally petered out. Nothing was done. Meantime, Miller was indicted, and released on bail. Everybody was sorry for him, and he walked the streets searching for sympathy. Eventually, he was brought to trial, made a modified plea of guilty, and was sentenced to two years in state's prison. They gave him a great send-off when he left to serve his sentence. Many of the sob sisters, and a lot of his political friends were at the station when the deputy sheriff brought him down. It looked as if he was starting for a promotion instead of a prison. He is there yet, with a soft job in the warden's office.

Hunkins kept the matter before the public skillfully, bearing down, always, on the responsibility of Mayor Spearle, and quoting often Spearle's high-flown statement. Indeed, he managed it so well that the political nickname for Spearle came to be "No-stigma" Spearle, which made that aspiring statesman most unhappy.

One morning, at breakfast, about ten days after the first happenings, Dad said to me: "Remember that conversation we had with Perkins at the club?"

"Yes, sir. Why?"

"Oh, that casual remark of mine got such a rise out of that shifty gentleman that I made up my mind there was something in it. Yesterday I happened to drop into a directors' meeting at the Consolidated National Bank, where I am a member, you know. I was right, by ginger!"

"Right? How?"

"Why, on the day after you made those charges

Perkins borrowed \$40,000 at that bank, and, by grubbing around a little, I find that he was most desperately anxious to get it, and put up a big wad of gilt-edged stuff as collateral for it. Circumstantial evidence, perhaps, but satisfactory to me."

"Do you mean Perkins was in that combination?"

"Perhaps not in it, but of it. I mean that Perkins is so beholden to Pendergrast, in some way or other, that he had to get that money for Pendergrast when this crisis came. Store that away in your head. It may be worth while to pay some attention to Brother Perkins at the proper time."

"But Perkins is one of our leading business men," I protested.

"All the more reason to remember what I'm telling you," Dad replied, and changed the subject.

CHAPTER XX

A DISCOURSE ON WOMEN

ONE of our meetings at the Tucker Building headquarters became a mutual admiration conclave. We cheered and congratulated and made rosy predictions over the reports of Miss Crawford, who told us that the checked and corrected rolls, with all duplications eliminated, showed that a few more than four thousand men have signed the pledges, and two thousand women. Her investigations indicate that about a third of these are men returned from France, and the remainder men released from training camps. She said another contingent of overseas men is due soon, and that practically all the men from the camps will be home within a month. She reported that our three centers, the original and central one in the Sixth Ward, and the newly-established ones in the eastern and the western sections of the city, are popular.

"I hate to be a kill-joy," said Dowd after this had gone on for a time, "but if you folks will stop back-patting long enough to assimilate a few practical thoughts on this subject it may help some."

"It seems to me that what we have heard is rather practical," said Colonel Anderson. "What makes you a pessimist?"

"Listening to you optimists for one thing," Dowd replied, "and some information I have at hand, for another."

"Shall we hear the calamity howler?" I asked the others.

"Go ahead, Dowd," said the Colonel. "Let's have it."

"I gather from what you have all been saying that you think we not only originated this idea, but that we are the sole trustees and executors of it. Let me set you right on that point. I had a letter from France the other day giving me the details of that conference of American soldiers in Paris the newspaper despatches mentioned where preliminary details were worked out for a national organization and preparations made for a convention in this country, later in the year, for the purpose of effecting a permanent organization of a national association of veterans of this war. Also, I have letters and literature showing that there already is in this country a lively organization with the same end in view; and I am informed that in various parts of the country other organizations are in process of formation. Furthermore, here in this city there is an opposition, that is backed by some politicians who seek to counteract what we are doing, and is having some success. Wherefore, I would advise two things."

"What two things?" asked Miss Harrow.

"A reasonable portion of humility, and a considerable amount of hustle, both adjurations beginning with the well known letter H, which, by the way, designates a third and active factor for consideration—Hunkins."

"Hunkins?" chorused several of us. "Is he in it?"

"He is. He knows the potential political value of these soldiers as well as we do—probably better, and he has traps and bird lime and nets out in every direction."

This information changed the aspect of the meeting from mutual admiration to mutual anxiety. After we had discussed these communications indecisively for a time, Sergeant Ralston turned to Dowd and asked: "What's the answer?"

"Work," said Dowd. "We must get the bulk of these men and women into our organization or our plans all fail. In the first place, if when the time comes for welding all these various bodies into one great, national body, we are divided into two, or several camps here, we lose our influence. We must act in unison and intelligently when it comes to the national operations. Second, if we play our cards skillfully we may be able to give our members a practical demonstration of what may be accomplished by united action before this national organization matter comes to a head."

"In what way?" came at Dowd from various persons.

"In a very practical way," Dowd replied. "We hold a city election this fall in which we shall choose a Mayor. That election will be preceded by a primary wherein the candidates will be selected to contest the election in November. If we make it our business to find out who the candidates are likely to be, we, possibly, and in great measure, may be able to throw our strength to the better man; or, if neither of the can-

didates proposed by the organizations, and none that may contest independently, is acceptable to us, it will be a good plan, just for an experiment and to excite interest and enthusiasm, to run a candidate of our own. We may not win, but it will be good experience, just the same."

"Have you heard anything about candidates?" I asked.

"Not yet. I take it for granted that Spearle will ask for re-election, but I have no news of the Hunkins choice. It is my opinion that we cannot support Spearle, in any circumstances. Hence, that leaves us the choice, in the primaries, of the Hunkins man, if he is a good man, or our own man. Unless Hunkins sets up a most acceptable candidate I am in favor of putting a candidate of our own—a soldiers' candidate—into the primary."

"Wouldn't that make it easier for Spearle?"

"No, but more difficult for Hunkins. The charter specifies that the persons who receive the largest and the next largest number of votes for Mayor in the primary and are certified thus by the Board of Elections, shall be the candidates to be voted for at the election."

"Then if our man receives the second largest number, and Spearle the largest number, say, the contest will be between our man and Spearle?"

"Exactly, and if our man runs third, the Hunkins man and Spearle will fight it out. The place for our big contest is in the primary, which will be held four weeks before the date of the election. We must prepare for that."

A general discussion followed Dowd's talk that ranged from denunciations of the boss system to considerations of the weather. Suggestions were made that were so cautious and conservative we laughed over them, and proposals that were so radical they astonished. Some advised waiting and watching, and the use of our moral influence, and others the open defiance of Hunkins and Spearle, and an immediate announcement of a soldiers' ticket.

After this had gone on for a time Miss Harrow's impatience culminated in a contemptuous "Pish!"

"What's the use of all this talk?" she asked. "Why should we play second fiddle to Hunkins or any other man? I think we should have a candidate. The way to organize and hold these people is to give them something more tangible than talk and vague prospects to organize for. That is my opinion."

"It is my opinion, too," said Dowd, "but it is too early to talk of candidates as yet. That will expose our plans to the men who must not be forewarned."

"Expose them, then! I tell you we must give a greater incentive to these men and women than a lecture, a doughnut, and a phonograph concert to hold them in line."

"Certainly, Miss Harrow," assented Dowd, "but we find lectures, doughnuts and phonograph concerts very helpful at the start."

"Pshaw!" she sniffed, "if I were a man I'd run myself."

"Why not run as a woman?" asked Miss Crawford, with mischief in her eyes.

"Maybe I shall," retorted Miss Harrow. "Any-

how, I'm better fitted for it than a good many men I know."

Everybody assured the militant Miss Harrow that that is undeniably the case, and that mollified her somewhat, but after the meeting Dowd told Miss Crawford and myself: "That lady demands action, and she'll be getting it, too, in ways we do not like if we do not watch out."

"Oh, she is all right," said Miss Crawford. "She feels deeply on the woman question, and is militant and uncompromising. She believes that any end justifies the means for universal suffrage."

I wondered, many times, just what Miss Crawford's ideas on that question are. The "prison special" of the militants stopped off for a meeting with us, and I went to the meeting, and saw Miss Crawford there. So I asked her: "How do you feel about it?"

"Do you really want to know?"

"I do, indeed."

"Well, you must submit to a little lecture, then, for I can't tell you in a sentence."

"Go ahead," urged both Dowd and myself. "We'll be glad to get your ideas."

"The important phase of it all," she said, "is how the average woman feels about it, and I have devoted myself to finding that out. I think I can analyze her feelings and thoughts, for many of them feel rather than think, with fair accuracy. In the first place, the women of this country, separate, broadly, into three groups. One group believes in militancy. Another group believes women should not ask for the vote. The third group is in a middle frame of mind and

feeling. That is the more important group, as it is far the larger—at least eighty per cent. of all our women comprise it.

“What any cause, commodity, or conclusion must have to attain power is advertisement—publicity. In some cases, as, for example, with the Presidential office, power brings publicity, but in the majority of cases publicity brings power. Hence, you will find insistent in the minds of the great majority of women in this country the question whether the cause of universal suffrage would be so far along as it is now—I mean in the minds of the women of the third and largest group—if the militant tactics of some of the women had not been followed; or whether it would have arrived anyhow, of its own merits. A great many women are puzzled to know how suffrage would have made any advance if the women had not been as aggressive as they have been. They haven’t found an answer for that, although, instinctively, they revolt at mob arrests and hunger strikes and such demonstrations.

“Most women believe in suffrage down deep in their hearts, whether they are active in the cause or not, because they believe in their own intelligence no matter how man centuries of derision of that intelligence they have endured from the men. It is a deep-seated, human emotion, this desire for equal rights with the men, and it ramifies in many ways from, and transcends in many ways the suffrage manifestation. This is especially true now that this world war has been fought and won by us. Women have come out of it with a feeling that they helped to fight it, in work, and to pay for it in taxes and privations, to

say nothing of that other and sentimental side of helping to furnish the fighters. Women have come to a place, now, where they think it is not fair not to let them have a world partnership, not to allow them to have a say in governmental affairs if they want it.

"Most women in this country, the great bulk of them, are not turning a hand to get these equal rights, but they want them in their hearts; and do not agree with the woman's-place-in-the-home arguments of many of the men, and of the anti-suffragists. They admit that the woman's place is in the home, of course, but their protest, either vocal or not, is that the home must not be made a prison, and if they desire to come out of it they shall have an opportunity. A good many have said to me that while their places may be in the home that does not prevent them from being independently taxed if they have incomes, nor to be subject to all other regulations and imposts; the oldest and truest argument for equal suffrage, now brought home to many women for the first time by the money side of the war in all its various personal manifestations, demands, and obligations.

"The inner and true psychology of it all is that this great desire for equality has been impressing itself on women for a long space of time, making some militant, and others merely thoughtful, but all anxious to assume an equal share of obligations if given an equal responsibility. They think, whether they say it or not, that the world scale does not hang evenly and justly, and that it will not until what seems now assured entirely comes to pass.

"Those of us who have gone into the matter perhaps more fully than the average woman realize that most of this is subjective sensation rather than objective reason, among the larger third group of average women, I mean; and that the task of those who do realize this is to teach the women of this country to discard consideration of both the individual phase, and the non-essential of method of attainment and utilize the benefits of the new era. They must be taught that. Most of them know, only vaguely, and many not at all, what they can do, but they are quick to learn, and once they have learned, their enormous forces may be intelligently and effectively directed and applied and will be, I may say, speaking for the sex in general. I hope you believe in suffrage," she concluded, turning to me.

"Why, yes, I do," I replied, "although I haven't thought of it much."

"Well, you would better begin thinking of it a good deal, if you intend to remain in politics, for the women will have a far greater hand in running things in this country, from now on, than they now have, and they are quite important in various sections already."

"Do they take readily to politics?"

"Not so readily as you would think, when you consider that the woman mind is intrinsically political in its workings, but that is because they are foreign to party politics. Their politics is of domestic nature. Also as they grasp the essential and important and indisputable fact that the politics and diplomacy it takes to manage and direct one man may be extended, in a portion of its feminine demonstrations, to the manage-

ment and direction of many men it will be all up with you males. The women will control everything. Potentially, they are all politicians."

"Rather discouraging prospect; don't you think so, Dowd?"

"Oh, I don't know," said Dowd, "it all depends on the women."

"Really," added Miss Crawford, "I do not think it will be so terrifying, for it is my opinion that you will find that the women will be juster to the men than the men have been to the women."

"How do you find these soldier women?" asked Dowd.

"Just women, except that the war, and the participation of their men in it, have intensified their maternal aspects in a way, and have accentuated their desires to get all that may be obtained for their men. In reality, I think the great danger to suffrage, from a woman's viewpoint, is that the women will utilize their power more for their sons and their other males than for themselves. For example, these soldier women are keen that this organization of ours, to which they are coming rapidly, will get benefits for the boys, not for themselves except as they incidentally will profit; and they desire to utilize their power to that end. In that way, it is likely, so far as the average woman is concerned, until the average woman's education is complete, you men will be able to maintain most of the power, not because you get it yourselves, but because the women will give it to you themselves."

"In other words," said Dowd, "universal suffrage

and equal rights and all the rest of it will be complicated with the eternal feminine."

"Exactly," Miss Crawford replied, "and no true woman would have it any other way."

CHAPTER XXI

HUNKINS PICKS PERKINS

DOWD prodded me into great activity among the returned soldiers, just as he prodded all others of our central committee. We held meetings nearly every night, and I gradually developed into a confident speaker, whether good or bad.

"For Heaven's sake, Tommie, have a heart," I said one day, after I found he and Miss Crawford had scheduled me for three speeches at rallies in one night. "Remember I am an alderman and have work to do for my constituents."

"I'm not likely to forget it," Dowd replied, "with the *News* editorializing about you a couple of times a week as the fearless young man who tied the can to Pendergrast. However, this is the time to get our affairs in order, and as you volunteered for work I am seeing to it that you get work, and plenty of it. Three meetings to-night for you, and no less. I'm taking four."

I think Dowd worked eighteen hours a day. He abandoned his law business, practically, and threw himself into the labor of organizing those soldiers. Miss Crawford worked as hard as he did, and results were apparent.

"We're almost ready for a big mass convention," Dowd told me one day, "and when we get that over we'll be in fine shape to take this game Hunkins is framing apart to see what makes it tick."

"What is he framing?" I asked. "I haven't seen him for some time; not since the Miller exposure, although I have talked to him a few times on the telephone."

"I don't know yet. I get all sorts of reports. One thing is certain and that is that he is busy with the soldiers, too. He has a few fellows who served in the Army on his staff, and while he is not working openly, as we are, he is scattering a good deal of Hunkins organization propaganda about, just the same." Dowd stopped and drummed on the table for a minute.

"Say, Captain," he said, "why don't you take a try at it?"

"At what?"

"At having a talk with Hunkins to see if you can get a line on what is in his mind. You are the fair-haired boy with him now, and he might unbelt."

"He won't tell me anything."

"Maybe he will. It's worth trying."

"I don't want to abuse his confidence."

Dowd looked at me curiously. "Have you got it?" he asked.

"Certainly not, but he might tell me that way."

"Look here, Talbot," said Dowd, "I'm not asking you to be either a spy or informer. Dismiss that from your mind, and don't be such a shrinking violet. If he tells you anything in confidence I'm the last man in the world to ask you to break that confidence, but if

he gives you the information in a straight, man-to-man talk that's legitimate enough politics. You have just done Hunkins, and a good many others, a great service. Why not capitalize it a little, inasmuch as the project we are all interested in may be benefited?"

I considered that view of it, and saw the merit of Dowd's contention. "I'll talk to him when I get a chance," I consented.

"Do it now, as the postal card motto exhorts," urged Dowd. "There's the telephone."

I called Hunkins. He was in, and said he'd be glad to see me if I came right over.

"Heard anything about Pendergrast?" I asked him, when we were seated in the little room in the house in Martin Street.

"Yes; he's down at that mine in Arizona, cursing everybody, but especially you and me, and drinking more bad liquor than is good for him, even though the mine is in a dry territory. Trust Pendergrast to establish relations with the boot-leggers. He's expert in that sort of thing."

"Is he coming back?"

"Not yet. He will eventually, no doubt, and may even try to run in under cover soon, but it will be some time before he resumes his seat in the board of aldermen."

"Will Spearle stand for re-election?"

"Certainly. He's fixing for it now. He has already read Pendergrast out as leader, and has assumed the place himself. He'll be the only candidate from that side in the primary."

Palpably, this gave me my chance. I made the

inquiry as casual and non-important as I could, and asked: "Who'll run for us?"

Hunkins smiled as he looked at me. "The choice of the party, of course," he replied.

"The choice of yourself, you mean," I said, boldly.

"You flatter me," he replied, smiling again. "Who am I to dictate to a great, imperial, I may say, political organization in the matter of policies, or men? I am merely the servant to carry out the expressed wishes of these electors. As soon as the command comes I shall obey. Until then I stand and wait."

"Pshaw," I said, "you'll pick the man, if you haven't already picked him."

"I protest. You ascribe to me virtue that I have not; you attribute to me a potency that I do not possess. To revert to my mentor, Horace, 'Mentis gratisimus error'—it is a most pleasing error of the mind—your mind. I am exceedingly complimented that you have this high opinion of me, but you must revise it. What you assert is quite beyond even my ambitions, to say nothing of my capabilities."

It was plain enough that Hunkins was joshing me gently, and that I could get no information with those tactics. So I said, insinuatingly, "Well, I hope the candidate will be a strong man in every way."

"How can he be otherwise?" asked Hunkins, "when our great and moral party will choose him for a standard bearer?"

"Some of them haven't been," I said.

"Ah, well, sometimes circumstance overpowers intent. Let us hope and pray."

The next time I saw Dowd he asked me: "Have any luck with Hunkins?"

"Not any. He joshed me, quoted Horace at me, and I didn't get even an initial, to say nothing of a name."

"That's the way he works," said Dowd, "but I'll bet he has had that candidate selected for a month."

"Can he do that?" I asked.

"Do what?"

"Select a candidate without consulting the other organization leaders?"

"He can, and he will. Hunkins isn't an easy boss, like Platt of New York used to be. He's a hard boss. He rules those men by sheer force of will and intelligence. Not many of them like him, but they are all afraid of him. One of these days he will be deposed, and probably he knows it; but so long as he is boss he is just that—boss. They may not like his man, but unless they can hand him a candidate who is better he'll put his man over, and he never makes a selection without having overpowering reasons for that selection. He plays fair, doesn't take anything, nor want anything for himself, and he has them all eating out of his hand."

"You say they are afraid of him," I said. "He always seems mild mannered to me."

"Stir him up once and you'll see," replied Dowd, and the talk turned on other things. We had reached the point in our work demanding a big public demonstration. The newspapers were printing paragraphs about our activities, and we decided we must get a few columns, not only for the encouragement of the men

and to add to their enthusiasm, but to give adequate warning to those working at cross purposes to us that we control.

Dowd cautioned us not to say much about the political end of the plan in our speeches, for he saw danger in that, and our main exhortation was along the lines of mutual benefit to all, with politics incidentally mentioned as one way mutual benefits may be attained. We had almost completed our arrangements for our demonstration when the scene for another sort of a performance was set for us by Hunkins himself.

One afternoon, six weeks before the date for the primaries, Steve Fox shouted to me over the telephone: "Come down to Dowd's office—quick!"

"What's the matter?"

"Never mind. Come down here and get a move on!"

I was there in fifteen minutes. Dowd and Steve were waiting. "What's up?" I asked.

"Hell's to pay and no pitch hot," said Steve.

"What is it?"

"Catch him as he falls, Tommie," said Steve. "Listen, George, and remain as calm as possible. We know who Hunkins intends to put into the primary for mayor."

"Who?"

"Perkins!"

"Perkins!" I shouted. "Oh, you're kidding. It isn't possible."

"It is possible, and probable, and the absolute fact. He's picked Perkins."

"Why, dammit," I sputtered, "the thing's absurd. Perkins was hand-in-glove with Pendergrast."

"Even so, Hunkins has picked him as his candidate."

"I won't stand for it!"

"All right," said Steve, "take a chair, then. It's true."

I couldn't think straight. The thing hit me so suddenly and seemed so preposterous. I recalled my conversation with Dad about Perkins and his \$40,000 transaction at the Consolidated National on the day after the Miller exposure, and the conclusion Dad drew from that, and tried to square that with the often-displayed vindictiveness of Hunkins against the Pendergrast gang. It wouldn't jibe.

"It can't be true," I protested. "Hunkins wouldn't do a thing like that. Besides," I urged, seeing a ray of light, "it isn't politics. Perkins doesn't belong to Hunkins' party."

"Oh, yes, he does," said Steve. "He's regular that way."

"But I tell you he has been in with Pendergrast."

"Why not? Perkins isn't the man to let a little thing like party affiliation prevent him from grabbing off a good thing now and then. Pendergrast's gang have the city administration now, haven't they?"

"Yes."

"That's the answer. Perkins plays along with the ins, of course, in whatever jobs he wants to put over. That's business, but his politics remains unchanged; only his operations shift."

"Well," I insisted, "Hunkins wouldn't do it, unless—unless——"

"On the grounds that you are not only a member of his organization, and an office holder therein, but that you, also, represent a soldiers' organization in this city that will cast a lot of votes, and will not cast those votes for Perkins. That may be putting it a little stronger than it is, but you've got to jolt him, both to find out, and to stop it after you do find out."

"I can't understand it," I said, again. "What the devil does he mean by such a selection?"

"What does he mean?" repeated Dowd. "Why, he means that the good old days shall continue and be enjoyed by the good old boys. You can bet all you've got that he isn't nominating Perkins without knowing exactly where Perkins stands and how he will perform. Hunkins doesn't trade unsight and unseen. He joins no blind pools. They are all tagged and ticketed, and delivered before he lets them in. And Perkins will catch as many votes among the business and professional class as he will lose because of his store meannesses. There will be a Hunkins slogan: 'A business man for mayor' before Perkins has been in the field for twenty minutes."

While Dowd was talking my mind began to clarify a little. Hunkins either is or is not planning to nominate Perkins. Why not ask him and settle it?

"I'll go to see Hunkins and ask him," I said, when Dowd finished.

"Good!" exclaimed Dowd. "That's the thing to do. Put it up to him cold and straight. When?"

"To-morrow."

"Fine! By that time I'll probably have a better

perspective on the whole affair. Just now I'm in no shape for connected thought."

Nor was I, save for my determination to demand an explanation from Hunkins, if the story is true, or to get a denial if it isn't. After all my hopes and plans to help in obtaining a better city government to be handed Perkins! Politics surely is a tough game.

That night, at dinner, I asked Dad: "Dad, who do you think will be nominated for mayor?"

"For mayor? Oh, I don't know. Spearle probably will run again."

"I mean who will Hunkins nominate?"

Dad laid down his fork, wiped his lips with his napkin, and appeared to give the matter judicial consideration. "Why," he said, in a few moments, "it might be Cass, or it might be Stoddard, or it might be Camberwell, or——"

"But it won't be," I interrupted. "Hunkins is going to nominate Perkins."

Dad stared at me. "No," he said. "Somebody is joking you."

"Dad, I tell you it's true. Hunkins intends to nominate Perkins."

"Who says so?"

"Steve Fox."

"Oh, Steve is having a pipe dream."

"He isn't. It's true."

"Can't be."

"Darn it, Dad, I tell you it is."

Dad looked at me for a moment, as if the news was just breaking into his skull. Then he began to pull his eyebrow.

"Why, it is incredible," he said. "Hunkins cannot possibly be so lost to a sense of decency as to nominate that hypocrite, the accomplice of Pendergrast. He's a grafter. He's a trimmer and plays both ends against the middle. He's not fit. He's——"

He stopped, pushed back his chair, and tugged violently at both eyebrows. That means a volcanic disturbance within Dad. One eyebrow is bad, but two are tremendous.

"What are you going to do about it?" he asked, looking fiercely across the table at me.

"I'm going to see Hunkins."

"What for?"

"To tell him we won't stand for it."

"Who is we?"

"The soldiers, and others."

"Do you mean it?"

"Certainly I mean it."

"Let me understand this. You intend to go to Hunkins to-morrow and tell him that the soldiers of the city, and others, will not support Perkins?"

"Yes, sir."

"And you will be emphatic about it, and use a few cuss words if necessary, and not back water if he tries to argue you out of it. He's smooth, you know."

"I'll stick."

"Go to it!" said Dad, coming over and shaking hands with me. "Go to it! If you can stop that it will be a great thing for the city, but it will be a hard job. Hunkins is a determined and obstinate man."

"I don't care if he is. I'm going to tell him about himself, anyhow, and what rotten politics it is."

"Good," said Dad, as he started for his little room and his blue prints, "I hope you will. Make the best fight you can, and if he persists we'll talk it over and see what can be done."

CHAPTER XXII

I PICK MYSELF

COME at noon if it is important," Hunkins said to me when I telephoned to him next morning, "or at five o'clock if it can wait that long."

"I'll be there at noon," I told him. And I was.

"Still on the quest for the hidden candidate?" he asked me.

"I am."

"Well, I appreciate the compliment, admire your pertinacity, but deplore your judgment. As I asked you before, why come to me?"

"Because you have selected the candidate."

"Oh, my dear Captain, why do you make such an assertion? Certainly you cannot hold me so meanly as to doubt my disclaimers at our last conversation."

"Mr. Hunkins," I said, looking him squarely in the eye, "I do doubt them."

He was leaning back in his chair, smoking a cigarette, and steadily returned my look. His lips twitched a bit at the corners, but otherwise he took my implication of evasion, to put the best face on it, without a change of countenance, or attitude.

"Wasn't it Scott who pointed out that in matters of this sort it is easier to doubt than to examine?" he

asked, easily. "I think so. Or, to go a bit further with it, I remember a line in the Satires of Horace, in the second book, as I recall it: 'Acclinis falsis animus meliora recusat,' which, on the hazard that you have been too busy with politics recently to renew your acquaintance with my great philosopher I will translate for you to the broad, general effect that a mind inclined to what is false rejects better things. I make no particular personal application, and present the thought as descriptive, perhaps, of a mental attitude of many others besides yourself."

There was banter in his voice, but his eyes were cold and hard. He was indolent in his chair, and puffed at his cigarette as if the smoking of it was the only serious matter that engaged his attention. Plainly, he was having fun with me, as well as making a close scrutiny of me, and I felt the indignation that followed my first news of his choice of Perkins swelling again within me.

"Mr. Hunkins," I said, with considerable emphasis, "I didn't come here to listen to quotations from dead and musty authors. I suggest we dispense with the literary phases of this conversation."

"As you will; and may I inquire what you did come here for?"

"To ask you whether it is true you have selected Perkins as your candidate for mayor. Is it true?"

I watched him closely. His expression did not change, nor did he shift his attitude. So far as plumping that at him went in the way of rousing him I might as well have said: "I came to tell you it is a fine day."

"A candid question deserves a candid answer," he

replied, and his calmness added to my irritation. "However, before making that candid answer let me develop a hypothesis, perhaps two. Suppose I take the statesman's refuge and say I neither affirm nor deny?"

"Then I shall think it is true."

"That disposes of that. Suppose, again, I say it is true. Then what?"

"I shall protest."

"Protest. Ah, a light begins to dawn. As I gather your position, you are here to ascertain if Mr. Perkins is to be nominated for mayor by our organization, and, if so, you protest. Does that state the case correctly?"

I boiled over at that moment. "It does!" I exclaimed, leaning forward, "and I'll be obliged if you will cut out your persiflage and answer the question. I want to know."

Hunkins lighted another cigarette with much care, and blew a cloud of smoke. Then, as if talking to himself, he said: "He demands to know, and he protests. Upon what meat doth this our Cæsar feed? Well, well, I am nonplussed."

"Look here, Hunkins," I said, and I couldn't help raising my voice, although I tried to control myself, and remain as calm as he appeared to be, "I have a right to demand an answer to that question."

"Right? What right?"

"Because I am interested in good government for this city."

"The implication being that I am not, I suppose."

"If you are you will not nominate Perkins."

"Has anybody here but you said that Perkins will be nominated?"

"No, but you're going to nominate him just the same. You're only sparring for time."

"Sparring for time against such an antagonist? You certainly do hold me in small esteem."

That sneer cast me adrift with my steering gear dismantled. I pounded on the desk.

"I may be more of an antagonist than you think," I asserted, vehemently, "but all this isn't getting us anywhere. Once more I ask you: Do you intend to nominate Perkins?"

Hunkins pursed his lips and let a trickle of smoke escape. He seemed almost bored.

"Well," he said, slowly, "since you, apparently, will not be happy unless you can mix in affairs that are of no concern to you, and as I love to see all my fellow-creatures happy, I may as well tell you I shall nominate Perkins, as you say, albeit I usually refer to him as Mr. Perkins."

He spoke with an amused superiority that made me furious. It was like a teacher stating an axiom to a peevish little boy.

"You can't do it!" I exclaimed. "You can't do it!"

"Cannot do it? Why not, pray?"

Of course, I had no answer for that. He can do it, if he chooses. I felt myself slipping.

"I mean you must not do it," I said, vehemently, thinking to cover my lapse.

"Must not? That assertion is even more astounding than the other. To tell me I cannot implies lack of power on my part, merely, but to give me an im-

perative must infer superiority in you. Why mustn't I?"

"Oh, hell, Hunkins," I said, "this sort of talk has gone on long enough. I don't care how much you sit and quibble, I tell you that it will be a crime to nominate Perkins."

Hunkins sat up in his chair at that, threw away his cigarette, and abandoned his attitude of indolent toleration. His face hardened. Two little bunches came, one at each corner of his mouth, and his eyes bored into me.

"Crime!" he repeated, sharply. "What do you mean by that?"

"I mean that Perkins isn't fit and you know it. I mean he was in with the Pendergrast gang. I mean that he had been participator in, if not actual promoter of, a lot of the grafting done in this city by the office-holders and politicians. I mean that he is a two-faced, double-dealing pharisee, isn't square, and is on the make; and that under him things will be just the same in the City Hall as they have been, or worse. That's what I mean."

I realized, in my heat, I had gone somewhat further in denouncing Perkins than the evidence at hand justified, but I felt, was convinced, that a man who was in with Pendergrast, as I fully believed Perkins was, would be no amateur. That wasn't his first participation. I wondered what Hunkins would say, and I wasn't long in discovering.

"I deny those assertions categorically," Hunkins answered to this outburst. Then he paused, looked me up and down, and proceeded to castigate me with as

much precision, and almost as much effect, as if he were using a rawhide with timed and deliberate strokes.

"I deny what you assert," he said, "although it is giving you too much consideration to deny, even. Before I show you the door I require an answer to this question: By what right, or assumption of right, do you come here and talk to me in this manner; by what authority, actual or implied—you, a boy I put into a minor place, and gave an opportunity to get some prominence? That prominence appears to have destroyed your perspective, and dulled your sense of humor, if you have one. What do you mean by it? What is your excuse?"

"I don't need any excuse," I replied, facing him squarely. "I am a member of the party you lead, and I come to you to protest against an action I think injudicious, unwise, yes, criminal. I get my right from my interest in good government for this city. I do not assume it. I have it. Now, I've told you what I think, what are you going to do about it?"

I rose, doubled my fists, and stuck out my chin. I was so indignant I was ready to fight, almost anxious to, indeed. I hoped he would start something. Instead, his face relaxed, and he laughed.

"What am I going to do about it?" he repeated. "Why, I am going to advise you to seek some secluded spot and endeavor to attain your normal proportions, which advice I tender herewith. It is then my intention to bid you good afternoon; and, at the proper time, I shall nominate Mr. Perkins for mayor. Now, having been thus frank with you, I trust before I in-

vite you to leave you will be equally frank with me. What are you going to do?"

"I'll run against him!"

The first time I ever had that thought, or determination, was when I shouted it at Hunkins, standing before him in the little room in Martin Street, my chin protruding, my legs braced, my fists doubled. It seemed to come from somewhere outside and to be hammered into my head by the mighty stroke of some unseen force. I started, gasped as I heard myself say the words, but, instantly, it was clear to me that that was a solution, a way to make my protest effective.

"I'll run against him!" I repeated, firmly, but in a lower voice.

Hunkins, still seated in his chair, laughed a contemptuous laugh. "That," he said, "will be a most welcome, if futile, diversion. It will add gayety to a campaign that threatens to be dull and uninteresting. Good-afternoon. Don't forget that the law says your nominating petition must be filed four weeks before the date of the primary," he mocked as I went out.

CHAPTER XXIII

TALBOT FOR MAYOR

MY temples were throbbing and my heart pounding as I walked down Martin Street. I was chagrined over the way Hunkins treated me, and frightened over my threat to run against Perkins. To be sure, I argued with myself, I have not made that claim, or statement, or threat or boast, or whatever it is to any person but Hunkins, and if I do not run he can only turn it into a joke to be circulated among the politicians. I am not beholden by what I said. It was the result of Hunkins taunting me as he did, the reflex from his sneers, and sarcasm, and contempt over what I said, and my attitude. It need go no further; but while I tried to convince myself of the absurdity of the thought of my running for mayor against Perkins, an insistent Why not—why not? beat down my arguments.

I stopped in the street. "Why not? Why not?" kept pounding in my head. "Well, why not?" I thought. "I am an American citizen, of legal age, and I am in politics. I am opposed to Perkins, and, consequently, from this time, opposed to Hunkins. I believe that Perkins must be beaten. I may be able to help bring that about. It might be easier for me personally, more comfortable, to get some one else to

run, but I am identified with the soldiers—I am a soldier—I am in politics—I have a clean record—I am somewhat known to the people—why not?”

As I was standing there a taxicab drew up to the curb, and I heard a woman's voice say: “How do you do, Captain Talbot? You seem lost, or something like that. May I help you find yourself?”

It was Miss Crawford who hailed me. She was smiling at me from the cab.

“Will you?” I asked her, eagerly. “May I ride with you? I would like to talk with you.”

“Certainly,” she replied. “Get in. I am going down to the Tucker Building.”

“That isn't far enough,” I said, with my hand on the door. “Let's drive out to the park and back.”

“I'm rather busy,” she protested.

“Please do. I am very anxious to talk to you on an important matter—important to me, anyhow.”

“Very well,” she assented, “but only out and back.” I told the driver to go to the Lamphier Gate of the Park, and to return to the Tucker Building, and got in. That would take half an hour. I felt myself lucky in being discovered in the first stage of my problem by Miss Crawford. She has sense, and knows politics. Of course, there are Dad—and Tommie Dowd—but——

“What is it?” she asked, coming directly to the point.

“Have you heard that Hunkins intends to nominate Perkins for mayor?” I asked.

“Yes, Mr. Dowd told me yesterday.”

“And you know about Perkins?”

"Yes, in a general way."

"That disposes of the preliminaries. Dowd told me, also, and I said I would see Hunkins and ask him whether it is true. It is true."

"Did Hunkins tell you so?"

"Yes, he said so definitely, and was most contemptuous over my temerity in asking him about it, and protesting against it. Anyhow, to come to the nubbin of it, after I made my protest he sneeringly asked me what I intend to do about it—and—and——" I was embarrassed and ill at ease. I feared she might laugh at me.

"What did you tell him?" she asked.

"I told him that I will run against Perkins."

"For mayor?"

"Yes. What do you think of that?"

She wrinkled her forehead, and looked out of the cab window for a few moments. Then she turned to me and said: "Why not?"

"Do you mean that you think it is a good plan?"

"I think so, provided you are in earnest, and did not make the threat, if it was a threat, because you were piqued at Hunkins, angry at his reception of your protest. Did you?"

"That might have had something to do with it, but not all. I give you my word it never occurred to me until I found myself standing there in front of Hunkins, who, plainly, takes me to be a conceited, swell-headed youngster, and holds me as just that and nothing more. Then it burst over me that to run against Perkins is a way to make an effective protest—not to talk, but to do something, and I told him

I shall run. As you say, why not?" I recapitulated my arguments to myself in favor of such a step. She listened gravely.

As we drew up in front of the Tucker Building, she shook hands with me and said: "I think you should. Politically, it is feasible. We need a concrete point for the demonstration of our soldier strength, and for an incentive for them. They like you. They know you, because you have been among them so much. You have a good standing in the community. You are known politically because of the Miller exposure and admired even in non-political circles for that. I advise you to run."

I was much encouraged when I said good-by to her at the elevator, and felt almost a candidate as I went to talk it over with Dowd; hoping he might agree with Miss Crawford, but feeling that he must advance some very weighty arguments to dissuade me. I made that decision, first off, myself. Then Miss Crawford endorsed it. If Dowd and Dad approve—but will they?

"Tommie," I said to Dowd, as I entered his office, "I have an important communication to make to you."

"Shoot," said Tommie, whirling his chair around.

"I am going to run for mayor against Perkins."

Dowd looked at me appraisingly for a moment, took a puff or two at his cigar, and then asked, quietly:

"Why not?"

"That's what everybody says!" I exclaimed.

"Who's everybody?"

"Why—er—er—Miss Crawford, and—and—myself."

"Quite a representative body of citizens, I should say," and Dowd laughed. "Tell me about it," he said.

I told him the story, from first to last, including my conversation with Miss Crawford and what she said. Dowd asked many questions, particularly about the attitude and definiteness of Hunkins as to the Perkins nomination, and chuckled over my report of my castigation. He probed me incessantly for two hours, going into my convictions as to civic government, as to the duties and the opportunities of the soldiers, as to many other things I had no idea might have a bearing on a primary contest for a city office. This completed, he came over to me, put his hand on my shoulder and said: "George, do you believe in yourself; do you look at this in a broader light than a means for personal advancement; are you sure that it isn't because you are angry at Hunkins?"

"Tommie," I replied, "I admit that at first, when I told Hunkins, I was angry, and that the idea might have had its beginning from that, from the desire to get even with him, to punish him for the way he spanked me; but since I have talked to Miss Crawford, and while I have been talking to you, I have begun to think it is a good thing, in many other ways than personal; and will be. I am not posing, and shall not, as a crusader, or an uplifter, nor as a young messiah, but I do think that if we can we should prevent the election of Perkins as mayor, and if I can help that way I am ready."

"You understand the grueling you will get, do you? It's no summer day's picnic to run for mayor in this town. The opposition is shrewd, and vicious. They

will make it most unpleasant for you. You will be ridiculed, abused, assailed in every imaginable way."

That stirred the fighting blood in me. "All right," I answered. "I think I can stand the gaff, and we can play at that game as well as they can."

"We surely can," said Dowd. "If you honestly feel that way about it, and want to try it, I'm for you, heart and soul."

We shook hands, and in five minutes were deep in the city charter and the state election law, getting the detail of the processes antecedent to filing a proper petition establishing me as a candidate in the primary.

Once we had those formalities straight, Tommie's mind began to work, and he planned a tentative campaign that included a soldiers' mass meeting, or several of them, ward organizations, a central organization, speeches, literature, finances. He went into detail that amazed me.

"Lord," I said, "does it take all of that?"

"Yes, and then some. You are going against a machine that is working smoothly, that is long established, and not too scrupulous in its methods. The only way you can win is by the force of publicity. We must impress on this city that you stand for cleaner government. We'll have to proclaim you like a breakfast food, show you to be as wonderful as one of those young men in the advertisements who run their salaries up from ten dollars a week to fifty thousand dollars a year by taking a course in psychology by mail. You'll have small sleep, no comfort and darned little anything else but work from now until the night of the primary, but you'll have a lot of fun,

and so shall I, and we'll make it interesting, at any rate, for Brother Hunkins and Pharisee Perkins. How about money?"

I hadn't thought of the financial requirements of my plan. Tommie's question startled me.

"Will it cost much?" I asked.

"Considerable," he replied. "You see, the other fellows have a going organization, and aside from the soldiers, we must build from the ground up. We can't use the soldiers as a machine for you, except indirectly. That wouldn't be good politics, nor good sense. We've got to form a personal, Talbot-for-mayor campaign committee, and finance that independently. Then we shall be able to throw our soldier organization in behind you, but it cannot be specifically a Talbot force. We'll be for you, but we cannot be yours in a personal sense. That would detract from the real purposes of our work. Have you any money?"

"A few thousand dollars, five or six, perhaps."

"Will you back yourself with it—it's a bet, you know."

"Certainly. I'll give you a check for it immediately."

"All right. That will do for a starter. Will your father help?"

"I hope so."

"Find out as soon as you can. And there will be others."

"What others?"

"I don't know yet, but there will be. There never is much difficulty in financing a thing of this sort if it is handled right. It's astonishing how people put up for movements and societies and leagues and all that

sort of thing. There's a new profession in this country—the profession of vocational reformers and uplift experts. They organize these leagues and things for the salaries they get for being secretaries to them. But that is by the way. With enough to start on we will be able to pull through all right."

"How much will we need to start?"

"Ten thousand dollars."

"I can get that much," I said confidently, thinking of my own five or six thousand, and Dad.

"Get it as soon as you can. Where's Steve Fox?"

"At the office, I suppose."

"Well, Steve must handle the publicity. I'll do the general politics. You will make the speeches and do the handshaking, and Miss Crawford will look after the headquarters detail and be treasurer. There's a quartette that will stir 'em up. Let's go and quaff a couple on it while as yet the chance remains."

That night I told Dad. "Dad," I began, "you don't think Perkins is a fit man to be mayor of this city, do you?"

"I do not," said Dad, emphatically. "He has always managed to maintain his standing, chiefly by his church-going and other hypocrisies, but I firmly believe him to be a crook. I don't think he ever did any actual stealing, but he has planned a lot, and has taken his big share of the swag."

"All right," I said. "Now I want to tell you what happened to-day."

He listened to my story intently, questioned me closely about the detail of my meeting with Hunkins, and searchingly as to my reasons and conclusions, ideas

and ideals. He went into the difficulties of the campaign, painted the troubles I will have rather darkly, and assayed me even closer than Dowd had done. All his inquiry was to discover whether I am in earnest, or merely wounded in my vanity by Hunkins, and desirous of reprisal.

"Of course, Dad," I said to him, as I said to Dowd, "I admit that the first thought of it came when I was blazing with anger at Hunkins, when he had jabbed me, and japed me until I was sore all over; but while that started it, it is a bigger thing than that now. I want to run because I think I can do some good for the city by running. That's the great side of it in my mind now. I still cherish a human desire to land on Hunkins, but that isn't the only motive. I'm going into it whether you approve or not. You remember, when I first talked to you about politics you were not enthusiastic. Since then a good many things have happened, and now I think I see my way to make an effort worth while. I want you with me, Dad, not only because you are a big man in this community, but because you are my father. Will you stand by?"

Dad put out his hand. He turned his head a little, but I saw his eyes winking rapidly, and my eyes were a bit moist, also.

I took his hand and pressed it. "To the limit, George," he said. He swallowed hard two or three times, then, as if ashamed of having shown any feeling, said, briskly: "Now, then, let's get down to the practical side of it. How much will it cost?"

"I don't know yet. Dowd thinks twenty thousand

dollars will be plenty. We've got to build from the ground up, you know, as he points out."

"Well," said Dad, "it won't be good sense, good politics, nor good anything else to make this exclusively a Talbot enterprise. You and Dowd and the rest of you raise what you can, and I'll guarantee all deficits. That's the best way for me to work."

"Thank you, Dad," I said.

"Go to it," he said, "I'm with you to the end of the trail."

"Then I can't lose," I replied, and Dad went off to his blue prints, humming a little tune as he went.

CHAPTER XXIV

WE GET UNDER WAY

AT the beginning our campaign organization consisted of Miss Crawford, Dowd, Steve Fox and myself. Dowd has an intimate knowledge of the city, and of ward and divisional influences and how to exploit or counteract them. Steve is familiar with the inner workings of the organizations, and knows what men do certain things. Miss Crawford has shrewd political sense, and a good executive training and a capability. I acted as general sifter-in, helping wherever I could. We met at the Tucker Building, but Dowd said we must have headquarters of our own, later, as my campaign and the soldiers' organization, which is non-partisan, must be kept distinctly separate.

At our first meeting Dowd said: "As I look at it, the three basic propositions that concern us are these: First, not to announce Talbot's candidacy until we get as much of a foundation for it as we can, and certainly not until Hunkins shows his hand with Perkins. He must be our reason—Perkins. Second, to dig up everything about Perkins that will help us. Third, to form a campaign committee of the best people we can get, half of men and half of women, to stand back of Talbot."

"The second is the more important," I said.

"I think so, too," Dowd assented, "especially as Hunkins' delay in announcing his man is playing into our hands. Still, that may be good politics, for Hunkins undoubtedly knows as much about Perkins as any other, probably more, and figures that the shorter the campaign is the easier it will be for his organization to put Perkins over. Steve has been working on the Perkins record since we first heard the news. We think this will give us a far better opportunity to demonstrate with the soldiers than a campaign with no other incentive than the soldiers' desire to elect a soldier. It furnishes a moral impulse, which sounds priggish, but is a fact, just the same; and I was trying to think of a suitable candidate when you thought of yourself, George, and solved the problem."

"Solved it?" I answered. "Why, we haven't stated the premises of it yet. It will be a hard problem to solve."

"Cheer up!" laughed Dowd. "The worst is yet to come. If you think it is difficult now, before you are in deeper than your ankles, I wonder how it will strike you when you get in up to your neck."

"Sink or swim, survive or perish!" declaimed Steve. "So long as George doesn't get in over his head it will be all right."

"Are you getting anything more on Perkins?" I asked Steve.

"Some things," he replied, "but I shan't be ready to report for a few days."

We discussed the campaign committee. I thought two committees, one of men and another of women,

would be best, but Dowd over-ruled that. "One committee," he said, "half of men and half of women. There are a lot of women voters in this town, and we must not start wrong with them by giving them what they may think is a sideshow while the men have the main tent. Equal representation, you know, and all that. How about it, Miss Crawford?"

One of Dowd's delights is to angle for a rise from Miss Crawford with remarks like that. Miss Crawford smiled a tiny smile at Steve and myself, and winked the ghost of a wink.

"I think you are right, Mr. Dowd," she said, gravely. "Of course if you mean equal representation in any other way than numerically I suggest that you select thirty-five men and fifteen women, because at twenty-five and twenty-five the women will far over-balance the men in general intelligence, industry and aptness. Thirty-five to fifteen will be about a proper proportion."

"Why not make the committee all women, then?" asked Dowd.

"Oh," Miss Crawford replied, "we couldn't expect such perfect political prescience as that from a mere man."

"Dowd loses!" shouted Steve, and everybody laughed.

We made a list of a hundred committee prospects; not that we want a hundred, but that we do want at least fifty, and laid out plans for approaching them. Letters and literature were prepared, to be sent to all these at the moment my candidacy was announced, other publicity was written, and Dowd took an option

on some rooms in the newly-completed Power Building, giving as a reason that he might need them for use of the soldier organization as more space than the Tucker Building afforded is required. It was decided to enlist Mrs. Ainsley, and Miss Harrow, if possible, to help with the woman's end of it, as Miss Crawford will be busy in headquarters if things turn out well.

I went to see Miss Harrow, told her about our plans and asked her if she will help.

"Help? Certainly I'll help," she said. "I'm glad that some man in this city has courage enough to stand up against those gangs. I'll do everything I can. Wait a minute." She went into her study, and returned with a check in her hand.

"Here," she said, "take this. It's all I can afford, and I wish it was ten times as much."

I looked at the check, which was drawn to me, and it was for five hundred dollars. Somehow, the idea of taking money from a woman gave me a queer feeling. I protested. "Oh, Miss Harrow," I said, "we shall have enough money, I am sure. I do not——"

"Pish!" she interrupted. "Have some sense. You will need all the money you can get. Ideals are all right, but they must be supplied with motive power. There will be no manna from Heaven falling into your laps in this fight, fearless young crusader for the right that you may be. I am practical about it. Why shouldn't you be? Do you hesitate because I am a woman? Don't you think I am as much interested in this campaign as you are? I am, and I demand my right to contribute. Possibly I can spare more if you need it. Now, then,

run along and go to work. I'll come whenever I am called."

Her bombardment with that succession of short sentences routed me, and I found myself out in the street with the check in my hand.

"Here is the first campaign contribution," I said to Dowd and Miss Crawford when I got back to the office. "Five hundred dollars from Miss Harrow."

"You don't mean it!" exclaimed Dowd. "I never expected anything like that."

"I did," Miss Crawford said. "I know Miss Harrow."

One subject of much discussion was the newspapers. "It is my opinion," said Steve, "that the *News* will be friendly, but not partisan. The *Globe* will hammer you to a pulp. The *Dispatch* will follow the *Globe's* lead in the afternoon, and the *Times* will be kindly, but calm. The *Journal* ought to be for you, inasmuch as you will oppose the machine, and the *Journal* is against all machines until it can bring about a socialistic machine—like all the rest of them. But what difference does it make?"

"Why," I said, "isn't newspaper support essential?"

"Helpful, perhaps," Steve replied, "but I wouldn't call it essential. Far be it from me to throw stones at my noble profession, albeit it isn't what it used to be, having become, mostly, an asylum for former presidents, and ex-officeholders, and other and various exes, has-beens, would-bes and never-wasers, who by virtue of their past performances, real or alleged, and not because of their present wisdom scab the regular newspaper man's job—far be it from me to asperse my meal

ticket, but the trick can be turned without the support of the press.

"For example, I noticed in New York city, a year ago last fall, that Mitchel was defeated notwithstanding the fact that all the papers, except the Hearst string, were for him; and I've seen the same thing happen elsewhere—in Chicago, when Carter Harrison walked in once, and maybe twice, in defiance of the shrieks of opposition from a press united against him and when Thompson won this year. It has happened so elsewhere, also. If we can get this going, and the newspapers must help it start, as a news story, we will have plenty of publicity without their editorial support if they refuse that to us. We'll see to it that we are live news every minute. Then they'll have to print things about us in their news columns, and the solemn old johnnies in the inside rooms can denounce their heads off in leaded brier, and we'll prosper, so long as we can get by the local room. That will be my job."

Hunkins continued silent. There was some discussion in the newspapers by the political reporters, and one day Steve printed a list of names of those "prominently mentioned" for the nominations. Perkins's name was not in this list, and that impressed me. So I sought Steve and asked him: "Has Hunkins changed his mind?"

"Not that I know of; why?"

"I see you didn't put Perkins in the list of those prominently mentioned you printed this morning."

Steve laughed. "Listen at him," he said. "It's old, but it's sure fire. The dear public always falls for it."

"What do you mean?"

"The prominently-mentioned wheeze. Every time there is a vacancy in an office of importance, or candidates are discussed, we run a few of those. They come out of Washington whenever there is a big office to be filled. 'Among those prominently mentioned for the place are——,' and then follows a list of names. And next day you hear the man in the street-car say: 'I see so-and-so may get a Cabinet place. He's prominently mentioned for it.' Sure he is—prominently mentioned by the prominent mentioner who sits down at his typewriter to write a dispatch about the situation, putting in every name, to make it good, he can think of that comes within the remotest range of possibility of official designation, and shoves the bunch on the wire for the home office. A lot of men around Washington and the state capitals exist for that occasional notice. They never get a job, and do not expect one, but they feel still in it, in a way, if they can make the prominently-mentioned lists."

"Then that list isn't official?" I said.

"Certainly it is—official by Steve Fox, who knows a good deal about it. I printed it to keep the interest stirred."

"Is Perkins still a candidate?"

"So far as I know he is. Hunkins isn't likely to shift. He's open-minded enough until he gets his decision. Then he sticks."

Meantime, Steve completed his investigations into the record of Perkins. He found his specialty is to organize new public utility companies, secure franchises for them on the ground that the competition will be of

benefit to the public, get those franchises granted by collusion with the officials, and then force the companies in operation to buy out the new companies, and divide the swag, keeping most of it for himself.

He did this with a cross-town surface-car franchise, a gas-and-electric franchise, a new telephone company, and several times with street rights that already going concerns needed. Each time he had a plausible reason for selling out, but each time he literally black-mailed the operating companies into buying.

"There are five of these deals that I have uncovered," said Steve, "and while I cannot prove that Perkins bribed the officials for the franchises I know he did. We'll have to recite the facts, which are bad enough, make the charge that he did, and take a chance. Furthermore, I have discovered that Perkins is a stockholder in that Arizona mine that Pendergrast exploited, for I managed to get the minutes of an annual company meeting he attended. Oddly enough, in the hurry of Pendergrast's get-away he neglected to burn those minutes, and that kind providence that watches over good little boy reporters like myself put me in the way of them.

"Perkins always has lived, publicly, in an atmosphere of complete sanctity. He is a most conspicuous church member, gets himself on the committees of all civic uplift movements, contributes to all clean-up crusades, and his private life is impeccable. Nothing moral can start in this city without Perkins in it, and, if possible, at the head of it. Also, as you know, he runs a big store, and while he is meanness incarnate in his dealings with his employees he is a good merchant, and his store

is popular. He screens his dealings with his employees by operating a bunk profit-sharing plan to which, of course, the newspapers refer with great admiration, he being a large advertiser. He is a glutton for publicity, and his greatest delight is to see his name in the papers as 'the public-spirited,' or 'our leading citizen,' or in some similar way."

"How did you get all this?" I asked.

"Oh, I dug around, and found there are men in the city who know all about him. They helped me out, not knowing why, but on general principles that anything to crimp Perkins is good municipal spirit. One of these men is Andrew J. Mayfield. Know him?"

"Indeed I do," I said. "He's a director in Dad's company, and his brother, Arthur, was in my regiment, a first lieutenant in H Company. He was killed in the Argonne. I've known Mr. Mayfield since I was a little boy."

"Fine business," said Steve. "He's the man to head your campaign committee. He's the livest wire in this city."

We went over Steve's notes carefully, rejecting some of the things he discovered as not susceptible of proof, and finally decided to make our campaign on the Pendergrast attempted loot of the city treasury for the exploitation of the mine, the street-car franchise, the gas-and-electricity franchise, and the telephone franchise, with incidental reference to the other similar operations. Steve briefed his information, bringing out salient facts, making convincing deductions, and minimizing the importance of points that might be construed as negating our statements. Steve is a wonder

at that. Being a good reporter he knows how to bring out the facts that help his story and bury those that do not.

When that was finished, and adopted, we decided to make none but general charges at first, and wait for the inevitable Perkins and Hunkins denials, reserving the proof of Perkins's participation in the city-treasury transaction until the last, for a crusher.

"That's the way Hunkins played it with the I. O. U.'s," I said. "We'll give him a dose of his own medicine."

"Correct," Dowd replied, "but we must not forget that Hunkins didn't exhaust his box of tricks with that one."

"Come on, you Perkins!" exclaimed Steve, when all was complete. "We'll give you a run for the money you are spending on this, and for the money you have already grafted; also, some publicity of a sort you won't like."

CHAPTER XXV

MR. PERKINS ENTERS

THERE was another week of preparation. I went to see Mr. Mayfield, and spent an evening with him going over the whole matter, and detailing our plans. He listened with interest, cross-questioned me minutely, pointed out weaknesses in and made suggestions for strengthening our proposed campaign; and consented to serve.

"Anything I can do to keep Perkins from being mayor I am obligated to do as a citizen and well wisher for this city," he said, "and more than that, I am glad to be of what help I can to you, personally, George. Send me your list of possible committee members, and I'll look it over, and add or subtract, as the case may be. After you make your announcement you may say that I have undertaken to form a campaign committee, and I'll put in a month or so at it. I need some excitement, anyhow."

There was more newspaper talk about candidates. Several names were discussed. Hunkins, when asked by the reporters about the matter, said the organization was considering the claims of various men, put forth by their friends, and had arrived at no conclusion. "All the organization desires," he said, "is to support the

best man who may be proposed. The field is open." Spearle had no opposition.

Under our law nominating petitions for candidates desiring to contest the primaries must be in the office of the Board of Elections by five o'clock on the afternoon of the fourth Tuesday before the date of the primary. Usually, there is some jockeying for position on the ballot, but this time Spearle had the advantage, and we thought that Hunkins would not file his petitions until Tuesday.

On the Saturday afternoon previous to that Tuesday, Steve Fox and Dowd sent for me to come to our headquarters.

"It's cinched," said Dowd. "Hunkins put in his petitions to-day, and Perkins is the man for mayor."

"How do you know?" I asked.

"Steve found it out. He has a friend in the Elections Board. It isn't supposed to be known until Tuesday."

"Shall you print it?" I asked Steve.

"You bet I will. There's no seal on the story so far as I am concerned. And I saw the Perkins petition."

"But he isn't required to file until Tuesday afternoon at five o'clock. Perhaps there is a catch in it."

"Not a catch," asserted Steve. "Anyhow, I'm going to print it, and I'll get a talk with Perkins to-night."

"Don't be in too much of a hurry about that," I cautioned. "If you go to Perkins early he may get in touch with Hunkins, or something, and spoil it."

"How can he spoil it?" asked Steve. "It's all set, I tell you, and, besides, I shan't go to Perkins until

late, just before closing time. I'll hold open a page for it, and slam it through. Then if Hunkins doesn't like it he can do the other thing. Besides, that will give us a chance to make a play on Monday, and get a good lot of publicity for our petition when it does go in."

"I wonder why Hunkins filed so early?" I asked Dowd. "I can't understand it."

"Neither can I," said Dowd. "It looks as if he is playing into our hands a little, but he isn't. Probably, he is considering us with the contempt he thinks we deserve. Anyhow, it's a sporting chance, and we'll take it."

Steve went to see Perkins at eleven o'clock that night, rousing that prospective candidate from his bed to ask him about his candidacy. Dowd and I waited at the offices until the paper had gone to press, which was at midnight, as the Sunday edition closes earlier than the week-day does. Steve came in grinning.

"Well," he said, "Perkins was glad to see me. He never overlooks a chance to grab a little free space when he can get it. He talked his head off. He's going to be a model mayor, and run things on strictly business principles. He spilled a dozen of the usual candidatorial bromides like doing justice though the heavens fall, and so on. However, he will take no hasty steps, and will be guided in all he does if elected by the prudent counsel of our leading citizens. He does not feel that a city election should be other than local, and has no comment to make on current national topics, although he has always been a reliable party man. He deplores recent events in the city adminis-

tration, and promises to make a clean sweep of all offenders. It's a talk that sounds well and means nothing in particular. You'd think that he has been running for office all his life.

"He seems to think he's doing a favor to Hunkins instead of the other way around, and he's all jazzed up over the prospect. He said he has been deterred from talking by Mr. Hunkins who feels that a short, sharp campaign will be best, and feels himself already right over in the mayor's office. He says he will have no difficulty in defeating Spearle, especially since the disclosures about the defalcation in the city treasury, and the connivance therein of city officials, not to mention other evidences of misgovernment by the incumbents of the city offices; and he is highly elated. Apparently Hunkins has said nothing to him about you, for he did not mention your name and I gave him a chance by asking him if he expects any opposition from his own party. He doesn't expect any. Hunkins is to see to that and Hunkins apparently doesn't consider you as opposition, or thinks you were bluffing. I'll bet Perkins is sitting up right now to get a *News* and read what I say of him."

"What do you say?" I asked.

"Nothing but what I have told you. I have smeared the story all over the first page, with a picture of Perkins, and his interview displayed, nailing Hunkins into it, and all that. There is no editorial comment. It's a straight news story, and, believe me, it will start something, too."

"It will," said Dowd, "and the first thing it will start will be an announcement by us, on Monday morn-

ing, that Captain George Talbot will be an independent candidate in the primary, against Perkins, which will be coupled with an interview with Captain Talbot stating his reasons for taking this step, and outlining his platform. That interview, if I mistake not, Mr. Fox, is ready at the present moment."

"It is," grinned Steve, "and it's a whale. I know, for I wrote it myself."

The many thousand Sunday subscribers of the *News* held their various breakfast table caucuses on Steve's story about Perkins and his candidacy for mayor, and went their various ways. There was positively no life at all at the club, where I dropped in at noon, to seek comment, save what flickers in Peter McWhirter, who was the sole occupant of the smoke-room, huddled in his big chair. Peter hasn't read a newspaper in years, and I drew a blank there. So I drove out to the Country Club after luncheon. The first person I met was Jacob T. Hull, the president of the Third National Bank.

"Good afternoon, George," he greeted me. "I am glad to see you looking so well. Excellent news in the paper this morning. I note our fellow director, Mr. Perkins, is to be the candidate for mayor. A most admirable choice. Mr. Perkins combines in himself high ideals and great business acumen. The Third National must use every effort to assist him, so far as we may legitimately, of course. I trust you approve."

"Do you think Mr. Perkins a good man to be mayor of this city?" I asked him.

"Oh, how can you ask? None better, positively

none better—a most exemplary choice by the organization. Mr. Hunkins is a public-spirited leader.”

“That’s what you said about Pendergrast a while ago.”

“Why, George, surely you misinterpreted my remark. I merely meant in reference to our affairs—the bank’s, you know; and with Mr. Perkins as mayor we may be sure of the friendship of Mr. Hunkins, also. It’s business, you know.”

Hull sickened me. “Excuse me,” I said, “I want to see Mr. Mayfield for a moment.”

Mayfield had seen the announcement. “Now, then,” he asked. “What’s next?”

“I am coming out in the morning, denouncing the nomination of Perkins and offering myself as a candidate,” I said. “Everything is arranged.”

“You are not laying all your cards on the table at once, are you?”

“No, sir; my statements are most general as to facts but rather pointed as to application.”

“That’s all right. I shall have something to say on Tuesday morning myself. Perhaps the afternoon papers on Monday would be better.”

“I think so,” I told him. “We can get that publicity while the thing is fresh, and follow it with a broadside on Tuesday.”

“Correct,” he said. “Now I am going to practice a few putts and think out what I want to say.”

The usual crowd of golfers, nineteenth-hole men, sitters, and tired business men seeking Sunday solace, was in the big lounge of the club. “Why, there’s the boy politician!” shouted Fred Daskin, as I came in,

"What's all this in the paper this morning about old Perkins being a candidate for mayor? We surely expected that you would run. Or are you content to be merely an alderman? Fie on you, Georgie, we thought better things of you than that! I had it all planned to go on the soap-box for you, and make cart-tail orations all over the city. 'Fellow-citizens, I come to request your suffrages for that sterling young statesman——' and that sort of thing. What's the matter? Won't the charming Hunkins let you play in the big game?"

"Doesn't seem so, does it?" I replied, holding my temper, and walked away.

I talked with a number of the men at the club that Sunday. Opinion was divided. I found that men like Mr. Hull thought Perkins a good choice, while the younger business and professional men were dubious. They had heard hints of shady dealings on his part. Mr. Mayfield was quite open in his denunciation when he came back from his putting, and several others coincided with his views. The general opinion among the dissenters was that it didn't seem right, but, after going so far, nobody even suggested a fight. "It's politics," they said. "Can't expect anything else from these bosses. Suppose we'll have to stand for it."

"Is it necessary to stand for it?" I asked.

"Well, what in thunder are we going to do? You can't expect us to neglect business for politics can you?"

"But," I protested, "this time, it seems to me politics is your business."

"Oh, let George do it!" said Furbish, who is our biggest contractor.

"Meaning me?" I asked.

"Good heavens, no!" Furbish exclaimed, as if astonished at the suggestion. "The George of the newspaper comic strips, you know."

CHAPTER XXVI

THERE IS GREAT TURMOIL

THE first two pages of the *News* on Monday morning were mainly devoted to myself; my picture, my statement, my history, my motives, my genealogy, my war record, my exposure of Miller and Pendergrast, some of my speeches to the soldiers, my plan of campaign, my ideas on city government—Steve certainly made a splash. And the city rose to it with a whoop. Not so much was publicly known about Talbot, but a good deal about Perkins and Hunkins, and by noon they were talking about me everywhere.

Steve put the salient points of my statement in a heavily-bordered box on the first page:

"I believe that this city deserves, and may secure, a better government than it has had and has now.

"I am opposed to the selection of candidates by bosses and machines whose interests are political and not municipal.

"I am not in favor of partisan city government, with its evils of perquisites and patronage, but demand a clean, efficient, non-partisan government.

"The city's business is the business of every person resident in it, and not the business of the politicians, and must not be continued in the control of the politicians.

"The condition to which our affairs have come is plainly evidenced by the city treasury scandal, which was political in all its bearings.

"The selection of Ezra T. Perkins as a candidate is a sure indication that Boss Hunkins intends to control the city as Boss Pendergrast has controlled it with Mayor Spearle, if Perkins is elected.

"I declare that Ezra T. Perkins is unfitted to be mayor because of his associations and dealings in the past with the gangs that have looted the city.

"I assert that Ezra T. Perkins had knowledge of the taking of city money for Pendergrast's private enterprise, and, in all probability, shared in the proceeds.

"I assert that Ezra T. Perkins, in the past fifteen years, through connivance or worse, it may be, with city officials has used the city machinery to further his private enterprises and increase his personal wealth.

"I assert that he has been all things to all bosses, using whatever party is in power corruptly to advance his own schemes and to the loss of the city.

"I assert that Ezra T. Perkins is unfit to be mayor of this city, for these reasons and others that will be made known, and offer myself as a candidate for mayor at the coming primary election to defeat him, pledging myself in advance, if chosen and elected, to conduct the affairs of this city honestly, economically, and in a non-partisan, efficient and business-like manner, and to have no dealings with party bosses whatsoever.

"If the voters of this city choose Ezra T. Perkins at the coming primary, on the one side, or Mayor Spearle, on the other, there will be no relief for the

election of either means continued control by a corrupt boss.

"As a soldier I ask for the support of my comrades in the Army, and of all who saw service in the war."

The editorial in the *News* was non-committal. It said it is a cheering sign of the times that young men are taking an interest in politics; called the charges against Perkins astounding, and gravely demanded their proof or withdrawal; predicted a lively campaign and pussyfooted in that manner for nearly a column. There was cold comfort in the *News* editorial. The afternoon papers had extras on the streets at ten o'clock, playing up my charges and printing a wild clamor of denial from Perkins, who denounced me as an unmitigated liar, and threatened my arrest for criminal libel. There was no statement from Hunkins in the early editions. Editorially, the *Dispatch* removed my pelt and hung it on a fence. It flayed me alive. The *Times* was calm, judicial, and asked for my proofs. The *Socialist Journal* rejoiced in the rumpus, said I represent identically the same class that Perkins represents, and moralized over the entire affair as showing that there must be a socialistic government immediately. It closed by calling attention to the fact that Eric Gustafson will be a candidate in the primary, also as a Socialist, and that his selection will mean a proper government. The headline on the *Journal's* article was "A Plague on Both Your Houses."

Dowd had prepared our petition, quietly securing the required minimum of three hundred names, as designated by our charter, and had it ready for filing. At eight o'clock Monday morning he sent out twenty

men, experienced in that work, with blank petitions, instructed to secure as many additional signatures as possible. They were told to go to stores, banks, factories and public meeting places, and to turn in their list at six o'clock that night, in order that there might be proper verification before five o'clock on Tuesday afternoon.

The sensation of the noon editions of the afternoon papers was the statement by Andrew T. Mayfield, which they printed in big, black type, inasmuch as Mr. Mayfield wasted no language in preambles or preliminaries, but came straight to the point, like the great business man he is. That statement read:

"I am in complete sympathy with the objects of Captain George Talbot in his statement of this morning wherein he announces his candidacy for mayor for the express purpose of defeating Ezra T. Perkins, who is to be the candidate of Boss Hunkins in the coming primary. As a citizen and taxpayer of this city I consider a complete overthrow of the boss system imperative for our well-being, good government and prosperity. Our city government should be non-partisan, and not political. Mismanagement, waste, graft, are all concomitants of such city government as ours is, and has been, as our citizens have been made painfully aware many times. I hold that the candidacy of Captain George Talbot, who is a young man of ability, principle, excellent repute, integrity, and high ideals, offers to the people of this city an opportunity to rid themselves of this evil of boss and organization control of their municipal affairs, and I have consented to act as chairman of Captain Talbot's campaign com-

mittee. As such, I call on all citizens who hold honest government in higher esteem than party politics to join with me in furthering his choice in the primary, and in bringing about his election."

That afternoon Mr. Mayfield came down to the Power Building offices, into which we moved in the morning, hung up his hat and coat, and said: "Well, I've left my manager in charge, and here I am, enlisted for the duration. Where shall I sit?"

He took a desk in an inside room and in ten minutes was hard at work on his campaign committee lists. Presently Steve Fox came in, in high spirits. "Oh, boy!" he said, "but that depth charge we dropped on Brother Perkins at noon in the shape of Mr. Mayfield's announcement that he will head your campaign committee created great havoc. The old man ran up to Martin Street to see Hunkins so fast you couldn't see him for the dust. Hunkins evidently stiffened him up, for he's making another yell in the five-o'clock editions, defying Mayfield, defying you, defying everybody who doesn't consider him the paragon of paragons, and shouting that he will have you in jail by noon to-morrow, and Mayfield, too, if he gets gay."

"That might not be a bad idea," said Dowd.

"What?" I asked. "Putting me in jail? I can't see it."

"Probably not, but I can. You won't have to stay there, you know. Hunkins may control the judges to some extent, but not enough to make any of them refuse you bail, and then you can come out and be a martyr as well as a crusader."

"Fine!" shouted Steve. "I'll interview you through

your prison bars, and we'll have the artist make a classy picture of you passionately and fearlessly reiterating your charges although you are in a cell. Great caption for it: 'Stone walls do not a prison make nor iron bars a cage.' You know! Great! We'll grab space by the mile on that."

"But where do I gēt off?" I protested. "I'm the one who will be in jail."

"Certainly," said Dowd. "Why not? You are the male Joan of Arc of this movement, aren't you? And you called Brother Perkins out of his highly-respected name, didn't you?"

"Yes, but——"

"No buts about it. If the little red ball stops at jail in this whirl it's jail for yours, briefly."

"All right," I said. "I'm game, and to make it good we'll come back at Perkins in the morning; but I'll bet it won't happen."

"It might," said Dowd. "You never can tell, and you'll be wise to get yourself a nice, shiny martyr's halo. You may need it."

Steve telephoned for the *Globe* political man, Charley Brinker; and I gave them an interview in which I reiterated what I said about Perkins in my announcement. I wanted to go further, but Dowd and Mayfield would not allow it. By six o'clock we were receiving acceptances from men and women we had asked to join the committee, and several small subscriptions to the campaign fund had come in. The men with the petitions secured four hundred additional names.

"It's all right," said Dowd, as we went out for

some food about nine o'clock, "it's started with a whoop. Now, our job is to keep it whooping."

Dad was waiting for me when I got home at midnight. The light of battle was in his eyes. "What's the news?" he asked.

"Everything is going fine. We're under way already. Fifteen or twenty men and women we want have already consented to serve on the campaign committee, and a few contributions have been sent in; and it is only the first day. Perkins is howling his head off about arresting me for criminal libel, but that doesn't worry us any. Mr. Mayfield is on the job. Have you heard anything?"

"Perkins came to see me this afternoon," said Dad.

"He did? What did he want?"

"He expressed astonishment, grief, horror, indignation and shocked surprise that I would allow a son of mine to engage in such a diabolical conspiracy against an old friend, a respected and honored citizen, and pillar of society and the church. He begged me to order you to get out, and promised he will go no further with his plans to stick you in jail if I do, and all will be forgiven as a boyish prank."

"What did you say?"

"I said: 'Perkins, you have a wrong conception of my relations with my son. There isn't any question of my allowing him to do this. He is a man, thirty years old, and his own master, not a little kid as you consider him. Furthermore, when it comes to that, if he is such a weakling that I can allow him, or not allow him, to take this sort of a step I have no

respect and no further use for him. It's his own enterprise.'

"Perkins blinked at that, and asked me: 'But surely you do not approve of this, John Talbot, my friend of many years?' I told him: 'Perkins, if you'll excuse me, I'm not your friend—an acquaintance, I admit, but no friend, and I do approve of it. I'm behind my son to the last ditch and the last dollar.'

"He was astonished and grieved and shocked at that, too, and said he expected better things of me. Also, he said he will have no mercy on either of us, and disgrace us both, to say nothing of making you look like the conceited young ass he says you are in the primary by beating you ten to one. I told him you will lick the socks off him, and that closed the conversation."

"I hope I will," I said, "but it's no fool of a job, for Hunkins has a strong organization."

"All the more reason for you to do it, then," said Dad. "Let me know when I can help."

As I started for my room the telephone rang. It was Steve Fox. "Say, George," he said, "Hunkins has unbelted. He's given out the first long interview in his history, and it isn't so very long at that."

"What does he say?"

"Ever hear of that pleasing Mongolian custom of skinning a culprit about a square foot at a time? Well, that is approximately what he does to you. I thought I'd tell you. Got to hustle now to get it in the paper."

"What?" I shouted, "are you going to print it?"

"Sure I'm going to print it."

"But you and the *News* are friendly to me."

"Just so; and I, also, am a reporter and the *News* is a newspaper. Don't lose your perspective, George. Good-night!"

CHAPTER XXVII

HUNKINS TALKS

I WENT to sleep wondering what Hunkins said, and dreamed queer dreams about Hunkins and myself being together in an elevator that was ascending and descending ceaselessly, while Mike, my Airedale terrier, acted as elevator conductor; and other similar fantasies. In the morning I shouted for the *News* as soon as I got out of bed, and in a few minutes my curiosity as to what Hunkins said was entirely satisfied. What he said was on the first page, with a two-column headline over it, and the top line of that two-column head seemed as big and black to me as the forty-foot letters in the sign on the side of the break-fast-food factory:

"VEAL OR VICTORY? ASKS HUNKINS!"

There was more to the headline, but that was enough for me and I read the interview, standing in my pajamas, with a temperature ranging from boiling to the point of complete evaporation.

"It has been the hope of the organization of which I am a part," he said, "that the coming primary might be contested without personalities, decently, and with

due respect to the issues and policies involved. That hope has been dissipated by the impudent, unwarranted and absurd injection of himself into the contest by Captain George Talbot, now a political beneficiary and office-holder by grace of the organization which he so violently and untruthfully assails.

"It so happened that the organization, some months ago, selected this young man to fill a vacancy in the Board of Aldermen caused by the death of Alderman Porter, elected him, and gave him that minor distinction. Also, in the course of events, he was allowed to make certain revelations on the floor of the aldermanic chamber, which revelations disclosed a fraud and scandal in the present city administration, and made him a figure in the newspapers for a few days. Neither of these episodes were of Captain Talbot's initiative, nor came from any merit, high civic virtue, investigations, knowledge, or strength on his part. He was merely the adaptable instrument of the organization—the messenger boy, so to speak.

"A long practice has taught me that in no pursuit of man is ingratitude to be encountered so frequently as in politics, but Captain Talbot's assumption, at this time, transcends any of my former experiences of that phase of human nature. Also, it has been my lot, in my connection with the politics of this city, to watch the development and decay of conceit, swell-headedness, egoism, in various empty, or soon emptied, seekers for office, but until this time I have not observed such delusions of grandeur based on so insubstantial a foundation.

"I ask the voters to consider this candidacy before

laughing it into the oblivion to which they will laugh it. This young man sets himself up as a fit person to be mayor of this great city, and inquiry into his real qualifications will show that he is a capable dancing man, and had somewhat of an army experience. That is all. Moreover, in setting himself forth he asperses the character of one of our greatest and most progressive business men, Mr. Ezra T. Perkins, and seeks to elevate himself to office by calumny of a man wise and experienced in municipal affairs, honored and respected by his fellow-citizens, and sterling in character and reputation.

"I regret that the little public prominence to which I, perhaps, was a party, has so swollen this young man in his own esteem that he has taken this foolish step. In time, it may be, he might develop into a useful, average, plodding alderman—no more. His assumption of capabilities that fit him to govern this city is more than absurd. It is pitiable. It is a public exhibition of a vealy vanity that not only must be mournful to his friends, but is calculated to make all others of the judicious grieve.

"I trust, for his own sake, and for the sake of his honored and respected family name, this young man will reconsider his action, withdraw his nominating petition, and merge himself again into the social activities to which he has, for the greater part of his life, devoted himself so assiduously, where he shines, no doubt, but which are no part of the education that fits for the important office of mayor. His friends should advise him thus. His inordinate self-esteem and empty vanity should not be allowed to make him a laughing stock

of the voters of this city. It will be real charity for them to dissuade him.

"Otherwise, I have no hesitation in saying that the voters of this city will not be deceived by the self-exalted protestations of this cockscomb in politics, either in believing his slanders of the regular candidate of our organization, Mr. Ezra T. Perkins, nor in according to his overweening vanity and conceit any recognition save that of derisive laughter. They will not exchange political victory for political veal. Nor have I the least fear that the brave men who went to war from this city will be deluded into support of him merely because he wore a uniform. They will demand greater certificate of merit than his frantic claim of comradeship with them.

"In conclusion, if Captain Talbot continues in the race, he need have no expectation that our organization will take legal action against him for his slanders of our candidate until after he has been eliminated from politics for all time at the primary. His palpable and amateurish attempt to make a martyr of himself will fail. After the primary, steps will be taken leading to his adequate punishment, both as a lesson to him, and as a warning to others who may be tempted to translate a passing publicity of newspaper mention into terms of a real, worthy and deserved position. If he unwisely continues in the race, our organization will pay no further attention to him except to utilize him as a sure incentive for laughter when in need of diversion—except to consider him as the joke that he is."

I had little appetite for breakfast. My experience in politics had not been sufficient until that time to

enable me to take attacks like that with equanimity. My first impulse was to rush over to Martin Street and punch Hunkins in the jaw. I've learned since that always is the first impulse of those unaccustomed to the amenities of political publicity and warfare—to retaliate by physical violence. I soon dismissed that idea from my mind. Really, after I had calmed down, and thought a little, I couldn't blame Hunkins much. He must defend himself and his candidate; but I did resolve to go to the last gasp, to the last pulse-beat to win. Hunkins stirred that up in me, if it needed stirring.

Dowd was at headquarters when I arrived. "Great stuff by Hunkins this morning, isn't it?" he asked.

"Depends on how you look at it," I replied.

"Well, how do you look at it?"

"As a well-phrased, bitter, stinging personal attack."

"Is that all? Man alive, it's great stuff for us, I tell you. Don't you get the point of it from our view?"

"I'm afraid not."

"Why, look here!" exclaimed Dowd, waving the paper in front of my face. "Look at that headline! Look at almost every line in it—youth—youth—youth! Dammit, man, can't you see that he has overplayed his hand? He's trying to make youth an absurdity, a bar to office—he's crying down youth. He's made the mistake that most middle-aged men do, especially successful middle-aged men, of holding any age but their own in contempt, of deriding youth for lack of experience and of laughing at age for ineffectiveness. He's stuck up there so long with his Horace, and his other musty truck of by-gone ages that he's forgotten he ever

was young himself. He's solidified the young men of this city for us, and the young women. And we'll get our share of the middle-aged, too. Oh, Bill Hunkins—you sure slipped a cog there!"

Dowd did a heavy-footed clog dance. "It's great, I tell you," he shouted. "Great—great—great!"

I began to catch the spirit of him. After all, the gist of Hunkins' attack is my youth, for his complaints about political ingratitude amount to little. "Shall I make any reply?" I asked.

"Not yet," said Dowd. "Let it stand. Let it sink into them, and then, when you get in front of young men, go to it. That's the place to score with it—before the soldiers and the young men. Do you suppose the young men of this city, or any other city, think that the only persons fit for office are ancient pappy-guys like Perkins, and such? Not by a darned sight! We'll plaster that on Brother Hunkins before this fight is over, and make him wish he'd never said it."

Things began to hum at headquarters. Mr. Mayfield brought in stenographers, typewriters, clerks and various other helpers. He made Miss Crawford treasurer, and in a few days had written and sent out an appeal for funds that brought in a good many contributions in sums from a hundred dollars down. His committee soon filled. It was interesting to see how the people responded. They seemed to welcome a chance, that is certain sorts of people did, to take a whack at the bosses. There was not so great a response from the business men as we expected, but neither Mayfield nor Dowd were disturbed by that. "We'll stir them up presently," they said. Steve Fox

took a leave of absence and opened his press headquarters. He left a friendly substitute in his place in the *News* office, and there were few days when Steve didn't have a good showing in all the papers. When there wasn't any news Steve made some.

Dowd busied himself, principally, over the arrangements for the soldiers' mass meeting to ratify my candidacy. I spoke at a number of ward meetings of soldiers, and others, and was well received. The newspapers printed brief reports of these speeches, the *News* and *Times* being fair but no more. The *Globe* and *Dispatch* adopted a policy of ridicule, and the *News* and *Times* took an occasional humorous fling at me, also. They are organization papers in a way, and strained a point to be even tolerant of me. The *Journal* howled with glee over the fight between "the old aristocrat and the young aristocrat." But Steve held a good grip on the news columns of all the papers, and we were content.

It was apparent that Perkins had abandoned his intention of arresting me for criminal libel, probably at the insistence of Hunkins, whose ideas about that were set forth in his interview, and Steve mourned because he couldn't print that picture of me telling of my ideals and exploiting my ideas through a barred jail door. The Hunkins organization enlarged their permanent headquarters in the Allenby Building, and went methodically at the work of getting most votes for Perkins in the primary. Hunkins was in direct charge. He organized a campaign advisory committee, also, and secured a good many important men to serve on it. His press bureau referred to me as "the two-

step candidate" and so on. By the end of the first week of the four allotted to the primary fight it was interesting, even exciting.

It was Dowd's intention to have his soldiers' mass-meeting on the Tuesday following the filing of the petitions. He hired the biggest hall in the city, engaged two bands, and had his workers in all the wards rounding up the soldiers and getting pledges to come. He placarded the city with great posters announcing the meeting, and told me to prepare to key-note the whole campaign. I wrote a speech, and Steve edited, enlarged, condensed and otherwise improved it until it was a rather forceful effort. Then I learned it. I did not include any of our proof against Perkins in it, but repeated my general allegations. We held the proof in reserve.

Meantime, every striker in the city, every grafter, every advertising agent, every owner of a programme, every association that intends to give a dance, every charitable organization, every ministerial faker visited me, and asked for money in return for support. I was waylaid and besieged by them at my house, and at the office, in the streets, and everywhere I appeared. One night three men came to the house, after telephonic preliminaries that were most mysterious. They claimed to be Pendergrast ward leaders, and I recognized one of them as a man named McCarthy who had been pointed out to me in the City Hall as one of the most active Pendergrast workers. He was spokesman and said: "We're done with Pendergrast, but we can't afford to break openly with his crowd. What we do must be under cover. If you will ad-

vance us a few hundred dollars apiece we can use the money to great advantage in our wards to help you."

"Do you mean you will buy votes with it?" I asked.

"Oh, no," protested McCarthy, virtuously. "Nothing like that. Even if we wanted to do that the law is too strict nowadays. What we mean is to spend the money around here and there influencing sentiment for you, and showing that you are a good fellow. Just making a fine kindly feeling for you, and passing out a little, now and then, to fellows who run clubs and to lodges and so on—advertising money, you know."

I made it very clear there must be no vote buying, nor anything of that sort, and had a long talk with them. They had detailed plans and numerous places of expenditure. It seemed to me a good stroke of practical politics, and I felt quite proud of myself as a politician when I wrote them checks on my own bank account for five hundred dollars each.

They said they would much prefer cash, but, in the circumstances, would take the checks as the transaction must be entirely between us, and they could not come to headquarters for currency. They relied on me to protect them. I said I would.

However, that did not mean I would not tell Dowd, and next morning, at nine o'clock, which is the hour Mr. Mayfield set for our first consultation of the day, I gave Dowd the story of it, setting it forth, much pleased with myself, as an excellent political maneuver, likely to bring results, in my opinion.

"Who are they?" asked Dowd.

"McCarthy, Lamson and Olsen."

Dowd grabbed for his watch. "There's still time," he said.

"Time for what?"

"For you to chase over to the bank and stop those checks. Never fall for a touch like that again or I'll put a body-guard with you."

"What's the matter?" I asked, alarmed at Dowd's abruptness.

"Why, I know those men. They are no more against Pendergrast than you are for him. They are pulling an old trick on you, getting money from you to use either for themselves, or to get Spearle votes. When old Colonel Archibald ran for mayor nine or ten years ago they worked him for several thousand dollars that way, and boasted of it afterwards. I know about it for McCarthy told me the story, and he got some of the money. It's old stuff. They wouldn't dare to come in here with it. To the bank for yours."

It was a chastened candidate and politician who hustled over to the bank and stopped the checks.

CHAPTER XXVIII

PREPARING FOR TROUBLE

WHEN I returned from the bank Dowd gave me a little lecture on the ways of politicians and politics as demonstrated in elections like this, and in larger fields, too, he said.

"Don't take it amiss, George," he began, "if we insist that you shall be nothing but the candidate in this campaign. Leave the politics and the handling of the politicians to us. You have led a non-political life, and have never been up against raw men except when you were in the army, and that is different. There isn't as much guile in you as there might be, as witnesses this check transaction.

"A candidate like you is meat for these old timers unless he is watched and tended constantly. The Hunkins outfit and the Pendergrast outfit know every angle of the game, and have played them all. Pendergrast's crowd run more to the strong-arm stuff than Hunkins does, and they both are shrewd, crafty and not any too scrupulous. Personally, I prefer to fight Hunkins, because he plays squarer than Pendergrast, but he is out to win. You must not forget that. Still, he's an engaging sort of a cuss, with a sense of queer, ironical humor. Did you hear how he beat old Eliphalet R. Branscombe for mayor about ten years ago?"

"No," I said, "but I remember Branscombe vaguely."

"Branscombe was a picturesque old chap, who had a pot of money, and aside from the personal scenery he affected, was a public-spirited, charitable man, but vain, and anxious for public mention. Those traits made it easy for Pendergrast's crowd to cajole him into taking the nomination for mayor, not so much with the hope of electing him as of getting liberal campaign contributions from him. Hunkins thought Branscombe a joke at first, but it developed that the old man had a good deal of strength and was likely to be elected. Wherefore, Hunkins set about to beat him, and he did beat him by a dodge.

"Branscombe had a big, white moustache, an imposing and carefully conserved imperial, and long white hair. His hat always was a black, wide-brimmed slouch he had especially made, carefully adjusted at a rather saucy tilt, and sweepingly removed when he made a salutation. He wore flowing ties, low-cut vests, with fine, white frilly shirts, and a long frock coat, and carried a gold-headed cane. He was quite a sight when he made his parade on Main Street in the afternoons.

"About a week before the campaign ended Hunkins imported a man, an actor, I think, who had the makings of a Branscombe resemblance. He listened to a speech by Branscombe, and caught something of his mannerisms, and intonations. Where Nature failed in the resemblance with the actor, Art stepped in and remedied the deficiency, and they made him up with the long white hair, moustache, imperial, the tie, the

coat, the cane, the shirt and all the rest of it until he was a most deceptive counterfeit Branscombe.

"Then Hunkins started him out. He went into the wards where Pendergrast gets most votes, and visited the saloons. If he found a considerable number of men in one, as he usually did because this was the last week before election, he introduced himself as Mr. Branscombe, the candidate for mayor, somewhat like this:

" 'My friends, and I hold you all to be my friends, I am your candidate for mayor and I come here to-night to make the acquaintance of you men, whom I consider the bone and sinew of the nation, the very foundation and rock bottom of our government. I come alone to meet you, greet you, mingle with you, clasp your hands, because I want to know you, and want you to know me. I am one of you. I delight in your manly, virile companionship;' and so on, following with a little speech on the issues of the campaign and closing with an earnest solicitation for their votes, because of the friendship established by this close and comradely contact. Then he shook hands all around, walked over to the bar and said to the bartender: 'My good fellow, have you any superfine rye whiskey?' He made considerable fuss over getting the right brand, while his newly-found friends stood around thirstily waiting for the: 'Come on, boys, and have a drink with me.'

"That invitation never came. After he had secured a brand he liked he ostentatiously poured himself a drink, turned to the crowd, raised his glass, said: 'To your very good health,' drank his drink, threw fifteen

cents on the bar, expressed the further hope they all would vote for him, bade them an elaborate good-night and walked out. Just imagine what those men said after he left without asking them if they had mouths on them. Of course, Pendergrast found out about it, ultimately, but they worked it often enough successfully to turn a sufficient number of votes in close wards to squeeze the Hunkins man in. That's just a sample of one of Hunkins' tricks. He is full of them. And the Pendergrast people know a few. Let Mayfield and me deal with them after this."

"Tommie," I said contritely, "I'll attend strictly to my own business hereafter."

"That will keep you busy enough," Dowd continued, "for instance, you've got a job ahead of you at the soldiers' mass meeting to-morrow night that will require all the strength you have, and so have I."

"What do you mean?" I asked. "All I have to do is to go there and make my speech, isn't it?"

"Yes, if you can make it."

"Why can't I? I know it by heart, and I have had enough practice in speaking now to put it over."

"Granted, but suppose they won't let you?"

"Who won't let me? What's going to hinder me?"

"Hunkins, maybe. We haven't said anything to you about it, because you have trouble enough, but, if you will think a minute you will realize that Hunkins won't allow us to get away with that soldier endorsement if he can help it. I've had reports on him. He intends to plant a lot of his men in the meeting—he has some of the soldiers with him, you know—to prevent an endorsement of you, or break the meeting up in a

row without action. A bunch of Hunkins shouters there can raise a lot of disturbance. It may not be the peaceful affair you have imagined."

"But we have a majority of the soldiers with us, haven't we?"

"We have, and our fellows will be there early. I shall preside at that meeting myself. It may be as calm as a knitting party, or it may turn out a riot. Be prepared for whatever happens, and be here at half past six to go with me."

"Are our fellows all set?" I asked.

"Set and ready to spring," Dowd replied. "I hope they won't have to, but if they do, there will be some policemen needed before the proceedings have gone far."

Dowd then outlined the plan of the meeting for me. Our fellows are to come in squads from the various wards, each headed by a man in command. The seats in the hall are to be blocked off in the center, and each block is to be in charge of men who will hold the seats in it vacant until our fellows are in them. This is to give us a compact body in the center of the hall. We expect about two thousand of our men to be on hand, possibly more. The men in charge are instructed to have them in the hall by seven o'clock, when the bands will play war tunes and a leader on the stage will keep them singing war songs until it is time to open the meeting. Dowd is to announce himself as chosen to preside, and will make a speech. I am to follow. Then two or three soldiers will talk, and resolutions endorsing me are to be presented and adopted. If the Hunkins men start anything Dowd

will rush things through, by force of gavel, and declare the resolutions adopted, no matter what protest there may be. There will be capable citizens on hand to make any physical disturbance the Hunkins men may undertake as unpleasant as possible to the disturbers.

"The two important points," said Dowd, "are for you to be there and for me to be there promptly, and for neither of us to be rattled by noise. It may be you will make your speech without anybody hearing it, not even yourself, but you make it just the same, and I'll do the rest."

"All right," I replied, rather pleased at the prospect of a lively evening, "I'll make it. You may depend on that."

When I left the office at five o'clock on Tuesday afternoon everything seemed in order. Final reports were in, from our squad leaders, and final instructions had been issued. Dowd said that an extra detail of policemen would be at the hall, and that the chances favor our men getting the worst of any police interference that might ensue inasmuch as the police are controlled, of course, by Pendergrast influences, nominally, at least, while the head of the department is an officer who has been held in place for some years by Hunkins. To meet this contingency about a hundred of our huskiest men will be in the rear of the hall, where most of the police are likely to be at first, to surround the police if they show signs of going into action, and hold them off as well as possible for a time until Dowd can put over the resolutions. After that, our fellows will quit, and we'll take chances on

the arrest of any of them for resisting officers, and be prepared to defend them later.

I went home to change my clothes to my formal speech-making rig—cutaway coat, and so on—and Dowd left to go down to the Ninth Ward to see his mother, who is ill. The plan was to meet at the Power Building and go to the hall together in my car.

Dad was home when I arrived. We decided that he would use the big car, to take himself and some friends to the hall, and take the chauffeur, while I would drive the runabout myself, and pick up Dowd at the Power Building. I was ready to leave at fifteen minutes past six when the man came in and said somebody wanted to see me. "Lord," I said, "another striker. Can't see him," I told the man. "Tell him to come to-morrow."

"He insists," the man replied. "I told him——"

Before he could finish his sentence Sergeant Davidson came into the room. "Excuse me," he said, "but this is important. How are you going to the hall to-night?"

"In my car. Why?"

"No, I don't mean that; by what streets?"

"Why, down Poplar Street to James and then to Second and on to Main. It's the shortest way."

"Don't do it," urged Davidson. "Go some other way."

"Why?"

"Because they've got traffic cops strung out all along those streets with instructions to pick you up at any corner, charge you with violating traffic regulations, and drag you off to headquarters to see the lieutenant

in charge. They want to delay you in getting to that meeting."

"How do you know?"

"Jerry Halloran, an army buddie of mine, who is back on the force, told me. It's straight. Jerry is picked to stand at the corner of James and Second and grab you the minute you get there, if you get that far. He's for you, and he tipped me off."

"But I shan't break any traffic regulations."

"You don't have to. They'll pinch you anyhow, take you in, and let you go after it's too late for you to get to the meeting. Go to the hall some other way. I've got a taxi on a side street. Leave your car here and cut across with me, and we'll go by back streets. They've got men at both ends and on every corner of Poplar Street."

"But I've got to pick up Dowd."

"Telephone him and tell him to go alone."

I called our headquarters. Dowd wasn't there. I told Miss Crawford to tell Dowd not to wait for me, but go to the hall at once, and Davidson and I went out the rear door, across our back yard, climbed the fence and circuitously reached the taxicab. Then we told the driver to get to the hall by a roundabout route.

"They'd have pinched you sure if it hadn't been for Jerry Halloran," said Davidson. "I hope they won't get Tommie."

I made a mental note of Jerry Halloran. If I am elected mayor that boy will be a police lieutenant before I am in office a week.

CHAPTER XXIX

DOWD IS DELAYED

IT was a quarter past seven o'clock when we arrived at the hall. There was a detail of policemen outside, and a good many people were going in. I saw numerous men I knew to be soldiers in the crowd. Nobody interfered with me, and I got to the rear of the stage, where I could watch the floor and not be seen. The hall is the largest in the city, and seats about four thousand on the main floor. There is a big balcony, also. I took a quick look over the floor. The hall was about two-thirds full then, the center section largely occupied by young men who sat in compact groups. Other young men were coming in. Steve Fox came along.

"Where's Tommie?" he asked.

"I don't know; he'll be here soon, probably. I had to come alone." I told Steve the story, and he whistled. "Rough stuff," he said. "Probably be some doings here to-night."

"How's it shaping?" I asked him.

"Fine! Two thousand of our fellows are in already, and they are coming in streams. Nearly as we can figure it there are not more than three or four hundred Hunkins shouters in yet. Probably some of those are mixed in with our boys, but we've shunted

a good many of them to the sides. There are a lot of policemen sticking around, but they are peaceful as yet. I'll start the music. Tommie will be here any minute."

We had a band on the stage and one in the balcony. Jimmie Melander, a local singer who was a soldier, went to the stage band and started "Over There." Then he ran to the front of the stage with a megaphone and shouted: "Go to it, boys! Everybody sing!" The soldiers joined in with the band and rollicked through the song with great volume of sound and considerable melody. As soon as that was finished Jimmie waved to the band in the balcony, and that leader played "Somewhere in France There's a Lily," and the boys sang that, too.

Thus it went, for half an hour, with the hall filling steadily, the soldiers singing lustily, a good many women and non-military spectators gathering in the balcony, but Dowd did not come.

"What's happened to him?" I asked. "Do you think they got him?"

"Maybe," said Steve. "But he'll be here. I'm sure of that," and he urged Melander to keep them going.

The singing went well until eight o'clock, but then the interest began to flag. There were shouts of: "Speech!" "Speech!" "Get her going!" "What are we here for?" "Where do we go from here?" and much stamping of feet and clapping of hands. These shouts came from the sides of the hall, mostly, but I noticed that our boys, in the center, were joining in, too.

"I'll spring some sob stuff on them," said Jimmie

Melander, and he had the band on the stage play "Just a Baby's Prayer at Twilight." This hit them right, and they warbled about the baby and her prayer for fifteen minutes, as Jimmie skillfully repeated the chorus several times. Then the demand for action began again. "Speech! Speech!" they shouted. "Where's this candidate for mayor?"

"We can't hold them much longer," said Steve, who had been to the main entrance to see if there were any signs of the missing Dowd. "Where the devil is Tommie? They've got him sure."

Mr. Mayfield came back, and advised immediate action. "They will get away from us if we don't begin at once," he said.

"But Dowd isn't here," I protested.

"Can't wait any longer. I'll open the meeting myself. Meantime, Steve, as Dowd has the resolutions you write another set while Talbot and I speak."

The hall was crowded. The noise and shouting were clamorous. Men were moving about as well as they could, and there were cat calls, shrill whistles, stamping of feet, and loud cries for Talbot.

Mr. Mayfield went out on the stage, and held up his hand. The noise gradually subsided.

"Ladies and gentlemen," he said, "Mr. Thomas J. Dowd was to preside over this meeting, and the delay has been caused by his non-arrival. You all know Mr. Dowd, and you know that he would be here unless unavoidably detained. Mr. Dowd——"

"That's all right about Dowd," yelled a man at the left side of the hall. "That's all right about Dowd, but who the hell are you?"

There was a roar of laughter at this. Mr. Mayfield waited, and then spoke again. "As I was saying, when asked to identify myself by some gentleman in the audience, Mr. Dowd has been detained——"

There was a movement in the crowd, a giving and shoving, and we heard a shout: "Here I am! Here I am!" It was Tommie's voice.

"Gentlemen!" screamed Mr. Mayfield at the top of his voice, "Mr. Dowd is now here, and will speak for himself."

Tommie came on the stage. He had no hat. His hair was tumbled. His collar was torn. His coat was ripped at the collar. There was a long red mark on his right cheek that showed vividly against the whiteness of his face. His lips were set, his fists clenched, his eyes blazing. He ran to the front of the stage, while our men stood up and cheered wildly, and the Hunkins contingent jeered, and cat-called and whistled.

He waited there looking out over the crowd, set like a prize fighter waiting the word to drive in against his antagonist. The cheers died down, and then started again. Dowd waited, calm, poised, every inch a fighting man.

He raised his hand, finally, and the cheering and jeering gradually stopped.

"Give him a chance!" came from various parts of the hall. There was a hush.

"Boys," he said, "Tom Pendergrast got back to town to-day, and tried to keep me from coming to this meeting; but I'm here."

"Where's Pendergrast?" shouted somebody.

"He's on his way to the Emergency Hospital!" roared Dowd. "This meeting will now come to order."

It was some time before the meeting came to order because our fellows rose in instant and vociferous response to Dowd's shout. They let go a cheer that could be heard for half a mile. We had a clear view, then, of our strength. Steve, who knows how to estimate crowds, said we had between twenty-five hundred and three thousand men there, in a fairly compact body. The Hunkins men tried to hoot our shouters down, but they got nowhere. We had the floor.

Presently, Dowd stilled them and said: "The central committee has designated me to preside over this meeting, and has selected Captain Stephen Fox as secretary. All in favor say 'Aye'."

There was a roaring, rolling "Aye!"

"Contrary, 'No,'" said Dowd.

"No!" shouted the Hunkins men, but in far less volume.

"Ayes have it," said Dowd, "and it is so ordered." He banged on the table with his gavel, stepped forward a pace, and began to talk.

"Comrades," he said, "there are two reasons why you were asked to come here to-night. The first is because we want to testify, publicly, to the people of this city, and this state and nation to our singleness of purpose, our closeness of organization, our union of motive, our determination to stand together for our mutual protection and welfare; because we have it in our minds and hearts to expand and make lasting the

comradeship begun by our service with the flag, and to act in all ways one for all and all for one in every relation of life wherein our close and knitted organization and solidarity of motive and thought shall be of benefit.

"The second reason is because, at this juncture in our affairs, and in the affairs of the city in which we live, we have presented to us, laid before us to grasp if we will, an opportunity to demonstrate to our people that we are a force to be reckoned with, that we have organized ourselves not alone for our mutual aims and desires but for the benefit of all our fellow-citizens. We have an opportunity to do a great public service, to show our patriotism, to express, in unmistakable terms, our demand for good, clean, honest city government, to prove that we have faith in the ideals for which we fought and for which many of us died."

Dowd talked for thirty minutes in that strain, clearly, and with a force and passion that brought our fellows up cheering many times. He outlined the purposes of the organization of the soldiers and sailors, reiterated his convictions as to the necessity for and value of such organization not only for the benefit and protection of the men, but for the further purpose of inculcating into their lives and conduct, in both public and private affairs, the great lessons of the war. It was an emphatic and eloquent speech, of a tone and character fitted to the audience, from a man who is one of them, who served with them, and of them, not with a commission, but as a sergeant, and shared all their hardships, dangers, burdens and successes. There were a few feeble attempts to hoot him down,

but the warning "Shut up!" that came from our fellows silenced the interrupters. There was menace in that "Shut up!" and they knew it.

"In conclusion," said Dowd, "it is my honor and my privilege to present to you a man who is standing for all these things, who is one of us, who served in the Army, and fought in France, who has taken a forward step by denouncing the plots of the political bosses of this city to fasten upon us for another period this corrupt and indecent government that now prevails, who has protested, and is protesting against bosses and bossism and fighting for clean, honest, non-partisan, business administration of municipal affairs—a soldier and a patriot—Captain George Talbot."

He turned and bowed to me. Our fellows rose again and cheered a big, booming, roaring cheer. I walked out to the front of the stage, nervous, dizzy, trembly in the legs, and with my palms and forehead clammy with cold sweat.

"Over the top, George," said Dowd. "It's now or never."

I began my speech, hesitatingly, brokenly. Then Dowd said again: "George—George—you're nôt going to show yellow, are you?"

That was the prod I needed. Instantly, my legs stiffened, my eyes cleared, my voice was restored. "Not by a damned sight!" I snarled at him. "Give me a chance!"

I proceeded with my speech, but it sounded so flat after Dowd's virile effort, with its studied phrases, and its set arguments, I said to myself: "This won't do. This isn't the stuff for these boys," and I cast

it out of my mind, stopped for an instant, and said: "Comrades, we lost, in my company, sixty-six men, in killed and wounded. Those boys died and were maimed for a principle. I know about them best because they were my boys, but all the thousands and thousands of other boys who were killed and maimed were fighting for the same principle, you among them. They all died in vain, all suffered in vain, if the principle for which they fought, and we fought, died also on the day the war ended, and does not live now, with us, for application to our lives and conduct, to our personal and our public affairs."

"Great!" whispered Dowd. "Go to it."

Then I talked to that audience as I talked to Dowd, as I talked to Dad. Indeed, I saw Dad over in one of the boxes and I did talk to him, not looking at him, but as freely and frankly as if he were the only person present. I didn't speak a sentence of my prepared speech, but I told those boys, in their own language, what we are trying to do, what the real reason of my stand is, and I got them. They cheered me every time I stopped to draw a breath, almost. I don't know how long I talked, but when I finished they were all standing and shouting and Jimmie Melander turned both bands loose with "Hail, Hail, the gang's all here!" and they sang it with a thunderous enthusiasm that made the windows rattle.

Three men who served in the ranks followed me, speaking five or six minutes each, and outlining clearly and forcefully the benefits of organization, and especially of organized and concerted action at this time.

One of them, a tall, intense, black-haired youngster of twenty-two or twenty-three, took a lead that was received with great acclaim. "We went over there," he said, "and we were glad to go, and we are glad we went, but we feel that when we were conscripted to go to France, and to serve in the army elsewhere, and set at work that might mean death for us, and did mean the greatest limit of human endurance and laborious effort, it would have been fairer to us, and more in keeping with our professed democracy, if labor, at home, had been drafted, also, and not coddled, and paid whatever was demanded in wages, and pampered with short hours and big overtime pay, and coaxed out of strikes by the most considerate and fulsome methods while we were in the very jaws of death, and subject to court martial if we failed to obey the most arbitrary demand. We feel that our government should have treated labor at home as it treated us; that democracy meant one thing for us fighting in France, and preparing in the camps here to fight there, and another thing for the men whose labor was as essential to the conduct of the war as ours, and who demanded and were given the highest awards for what we willingly did for thirty dollars a month."

"That's the way a lot of them feel," Dowd whispered to me, "and I don't blame them, but I wish he hadn't said it here."

"They like it," I replied. "Look at them." They were cheering the young orator. He was much excited, and wanted to go on, but Dowd shook his head at him, and he closed cleverly with a few sentences

about the value of organization to prevent similar discriminations in the future.

Dowd banged on the table for order after he had finished. "Brace yourself," he said to me, "here's where the row starts if there is going to be one."

CHAPTER XXX

THE FIGHT IN RATTIGAN'S

DOWD quieted the hall with his insistent gavel. "Comrades," he said, "it has been apparent since we began this meeting that there is a small and noisy minority here evidently for the purpose of making as much disturbance as possible and probably with the idea of preventing any affirmative action by this gathering. To that small minority I desire to say that the next order of business of this meeting is the moving of a set of resolutions covering the objects and conclusions of it. If, however, they continue the tactics they have thus far pursued the resolutions will be adopted, just the same, provided a majority vote is cast for them, and their objections will be met in the same manner they are presented. We shall not start anything, but I am here to say we can and will stop anything that is started. I recognize Captain Stephen Fox."

As Dowd was speaking I noticed that a considerable number of our men were moving to the right and left of the hall, spreading out along the walls. There were a few hoots as Steve stepped forward, but in the main the hall was quiet.

"I offer the following resolutions and move their

adoption," said Steve. He then read a series of resolutions, outlining and affirming the objects of the soldiers' organization as thus far accomplished and as to be accomplished, reciting the conditions precedent to my candidacy, and closing with this paragraph:

"Resolved: It is the sense of this meeting of soldiers and sailors of the great war, now bound together in a common body for mutual protection and benefit and for the purpose of securing for ourselves the benefits of a government that shall uphold the ideals for which we fought, and support the integrity and progressiveness of our institutions, both civic and national, that the best interests of the city will be served and clean and honest municipal government secured by the choice of Captain George Talbot for mayor, and we pledge ourselves to vote for him and support him in the coming primary, and, if successful, to do all in our power to secure his election in November."

"I second the resolutions!" shouted Sergeant Ralston, from the floor.

"Mr. Chairman—Mr. Chairman!" screamed a man at the extreme left of the hall, a man I did not know and had not seen before.

"For what purpose does the gentleman rise?" asked Dowd.

"I rise to offer a substitute resolution for those just read."

"Is the gentleman a veteran of the late war—did he serve either in the army or the navy?"

"In the army. My name is Phelps, and I was in the Second Division and was in France."

"The gentleman is entitled to be heard. Will he read his resolution?"

"Platform! Platform!" came from all parts of the hall.

Phelps struggled through the crowd and got to the stage. He was an able, alert-looking chap, entirely self-possessed, and of good voice. "Comrades," he said, "I do not believe the best interests of the soldiers and sailors of this city will be served by the adoption of the resolution just read. I, therefore, offer the following brief substitute resolution: Resolved, it is the sense of this meeting that no candidate for mayor shall be endorsed, but that, in accordance with the true spirit of democracy, all sailors and soldiers shall be left to their own determinations in selecting the candidate for whom they shall vote at the primary, and not obligated or pledged by a meeting packed——"

"A—h—h!" came from our fellows, who were restless during Phelps' reading. "Cut it short!" "Vote!" "Vote!" they shouted.

"Meeting packed by bosses whose methods are as arbitrary as those of the men they condemn!" shouted Phelps, and turning, faced Dowd as if to ask: "Now, what are you going to do with that?"

"Do I hear a second?" asked Dowd, imperturbably.

"Second it," came from both the right and left of the hall.

"Gentlemen," said Dowd, "you have heard the substitute resolution which has been moved and seconded. The question is——"

"Aw, hell!" broke in a loud voice. "We can't do nothin' here. Let's go!"

There was a swaying of men, a scuffle, and the sound of a seat cracking. Our men rose and turned towards the noise. The police began to move.

"Sit steady, boys!" ordered Dowd. "It's nothing!"

"Mr. Chairman!" shouted Davidson, from the quarter of the hall where the disturbance was, "go ahead! This guy won't interrupt again."

Meantime, Phelps on the stage evidently awaited some action. He looked expectantly out towards his forces. Then he ran to the front of the stage and yelled: "Adjourn! Adjourn! Move we adjourn!"

"No," roared our men. "No! No! No!"

"Motion to adjourn is lost," announced Dowd. "Question is on the adoption of the substitute resolution. All in favor——"

"Meeting's adjourned," came shrilly from the right and left of the hall. "It's adjourned. Let's go!"

"Sit down!" commanded loud voices. "Sit down, or we'll make you."

What happened then did not last thirty seconds. There were some scuffles, a few more chairs cracked, a few men cursed, and we saw one or two go down suddenly. "Go ahead!" bellowed a big voice. "They're hollering kamerad already."

"All in favor of the substitute resolution signify it by saying: 'Aye'." There was a scattering shout of "Aye!"

"Contrary 'No'," said Dowd. Our men thundered a "No!" that sounded like a battery of heavies.

a joke of it. Also, it would make it much more difficult to get an endorsement that would stick, or be worth anything. It's different with me. I am not running for anything. Mine was a personal matter."

"Personal?" said Steve, voicing my surprise with the question. "What sort of a personal matter?"

"I got into a jam with Pendergrast. I don't think he gave a whoop whether I went to the meeting or not. Probably he knew nothing about it, as he only reached town at noon. This was the way of it: When I left George, at half past five, I went down to the house to see my mother, who is sick. You know, I am not living there now. Soon after I left, and before I got there, while I was in transit, they telephoned that mother is much sicker than they thought and that they were taking her to St. Mary's Hospital. I found that out when I reached the house. Therefore, to see her, and I wanted to see her, I must go to the hospital, which is way over on the other side of the city; and I got in a surface car and rode out there. At half past six, the time I was to meet George at headquarters, I was with mother. I telephoned a few minutes after that to say I wouldn't be at the office, but would go direct to the hall, and got your message that you wouldn't be there, either.

"Mother is very sick, and I stayed with her just as long as I could. It was about a quarter after seven when I left the hospital, and I figured I could get to the hall in thirty minutes, which would be time enough if the rest of you were there. I was hungry as a wolf, and I hurried into Paddy Rattigan's place, on West Monmouth Street, near the hospital, to get a sand-

wich and some ginger ale. In the old days this saloon was owned by Pendergrast. Rattigan, who is one of Pendergrast's closest friends, ran it for him. After prohibition came Rattigan kept the place open as a sort of a lunch bar and soft-drink dispensary, with a line of hard stuff on the side for trusties and permitted by a complaisant police. While I was standing at the bar, Tom Pendergrast came out of the back room. I know Pendergrast well, and have known him ever since I was a boy, as he used to be at my father's place a good deal.

" 'Hello, Tommie,' he said.

" 'How are you, Mr. Pendergrast?' I answered. 'I didn't know you had returned.'

" 'Just got back,' he said. 'I'm glad I ran across you. You can put me straight on some things.'

" 'I can't stop now,' I told him. 'I've got a meeting to attend and am due there in half an hour.'

" 'Oh, come in here a few minutes. You'll have plenty of time, and I've got some important things to say to you.'

"I confess that what followed was my own fault. I was curious to know what was in his mind, and I went into the back room, with my half-eaten sandwich in one hand, and my glass mug in the other. Remember that glass mug. It's important—one of those old-fashioned ones, made of heavy glass, with a handle—you know the kind. Rattigan always used them for his customers, who demanded a full measure of beer for their money, and didn't bother to put in a new stock of glasses for the soft drinks.

"There were four tables in the room, and ten or

twelve of those bent-wood chairs, a bare little room where Rattigan's side door trade sometimes drinks, and where the men play pinochle.

"'What is it?' I asked him. 'Remember I'm in a hurry.'

"'You've got plenty of time,' he said, closing the door. 'Sit down.' I sat down in one of the chairs, on one side of a table, and he sat down opposite me. I was facing the door. He had his back to it. The table was the one nearest the door.

"'Now, then,' he said, 'I want to know what the hell you mean by mixing up with that——' George, I'd hate to tell you what he called you—'Talbot in that Miller business, and what you are doing now, and where you get off, anyhow, to be a part of that job Hunkins framed on me? You're the first one of that bunch I have seen, and I just want to talk with you.'

"'You can't talk with me about that,' I said. 'You know very well what part I took in that, and if it is any satisfaction to you I'll say that I am backing that same Talbot for mayor against your man and Hunkins' man, and we're going to win, too. That's all there is to it.'

"I started to rise, with my beer-mug in my hand, when Pendergrast pulled an old rough-and-tumble fighter's trick on me. He shoved the table over quickly against my legs, lifted his side of it, gave it a hard push, caught me on the thighs as I was rising, and upset me. I fell to the floor, with the table on top of me, but I hung to my glass. Pendergrast reached to the door, turned the key in it, threw the key on the floor, and said: 'Now, damn you, I might as well be-

gin with you as any one else! I came back here to trim a lot of you nosey guys for my own revenge, and I'll trim you first.'

"I had pushed the table off my body, and was upright when he jumped at me, cursing like a crazy man—darned if I don't think he has lost his mind—and we gripped. I dropped my glass, and tried to catch him by the throat. He was beating at my face with his fists, and we slammed around there quite a lot, tipping over tables and chairs. I thought the noise would attract somebody, but P. Rattigan stayed discreetly away and nobody else was in the place. Anyhow, Pendergrast got in a couple of good wallops at me, and I think I landed on him once or twice. Then I managed to get a leg grip on him, turned him over and moved back. He rose quicker than you'd think a man of his bulk could, and closed in.

"I knew I could hold him, because I am young, and he is old and fat and soaked with booze, but he is a fighter yet, and strong as a bull for as long as he can last. Besides, he might have a gun, I thought. There was no nourishment for me to be fighting in the back room of a saloon, and I wasn't thinking so much of whipping him as I was of getting out. I edged around towards the place where the key fell, and as I stooped to pick it up he got in a smash on my cheek that knocked me over in the corner. That made me see red. I forgot about any business I might have and decided it was up to me to beat this maniac into insensibility, especially as P. Rattigan didn't appear, nor send in an alarm for the police. I went at him, and we rough-housed around there for quite

a spell, clinched mostly, with Pendergrast trying to butt my brains out with his concrete dome.

"After this had gone for what seemed half an hour to me, I shook him off and swung for his jaw. I missed. The force of the swing threw me half around, and Pendergrast caught me an awful swipe and knocked me to my knees. It was a corker. My head is buzzing yet. I tried to get up, but half fell over toward the floor from my knees. Then I looked up and saw that this wild man had taken a chair and was swinging it to knock my block off with it. I leaned over to one side to pull myself away from the chair and my hand hit my glass mug.

"My fingers closed on the handle and as they did an old, rough-and-tumble fight trick flashed back to me—a trick I had seen bar-room fighters use in the old days. If you hold one of those mugs by the handle, and hit it a hard rap on the bottom, with just the right knack, the glass will shiver away, leaving the handle and a jagged triangle of attached glass in your hand—a fearful weapon. I felt if I didn't disable the maniac he would kill me, and I pounded the glass on the floor on the chance of breaking it right. I had luck. It broke perfectly, and I had in my hand a weapon that would stop Pendergrast if I could land with it. He missed my head with the chair but hit my left shoulder. It was a hard crack. I thought my shoulder blade was broken. The force of the blow over-balanced him a little, and he swung forward as the chair came down. I caught him by the legs, pulled him over and wriggled out and up to my feet. He was up as quickly as I was, almost, and

grabbed another chair. By this time I was as crazy as he was. I side-stepped, lifted my glass weapon as high as I could and brought it down on his head. I didn't hit him squarely, but a glancing blow. He dropped the chair, staggered and collapsed. He wasn't a pretty sight as he lay there on the floor.

"I took a quick look at him, and saw he was still very much alive, and trying to get to his feet again, but not able. He's game as they make them, but the cracks I hit him, especially the one with the glass, and his age, and fat, and the booze put him out. I threw the glass in a corner, picked up the key, unlocked the door, and ran out in the saloon. I didn't feel the bumps I had, then, and my only thought was to get away, and to the meeting. Rattigan was polishing glasses behind the bar.

"'Why didn't you come in and stop that?' I asked him. 'Why should I interfere in a friendly debate?' he asked. 'Well,' I shouted back at him from the door, 'you'd better go in and see whether your friend Pendergrast thinks it was friendly or not.' And as I went out he started from behind the bar.

"There wasn't a street car in sight, and I knew if I stuck around there the police, who would be called by Rattigan, would grab me, because I was pretty much disheveled, not to say bloody, in spots. I ducked into an alley, cleaned up as well as I could with my handkerchief, then cut across to the Ninth Street line, and came along in the car until I could get a taxi. This took me twenty minutes or so. I told the conductor, so everybody in the car could hear, that I had been in an automobile mix-up. Presently, I saw

a taxi, got it, and came to the hall. That's all there is to it. Oh, yes, there is more. I forgot to say that the Emergency Hospital ambulance went past the car, beating it for West Monmouth Street. I wonder how Pendergrast is. Let's call up the hospital."

Dowd went to a telephone booth, while Steve and I discussed the fight. Presently, he came back and said: "I told them I was a friend, and the doctor said that Mr. Pendergrast has a long, clearly incised scalp wound that, apparently, was made by some very sharp instrument. It is deep, but not dangerous. He withstood the cleansing of it and the sewing of it very well, but he shows signs of great mental excitement, even aberration, and is now under restraint. I can tell you, boys, that man is plumb, stark, staring mad over his troubles and the bad whiskey he tried to drown them in down there at the mine. I'm glad he didn't find you first, George."

"So am I, Tommie," I said, fervently.

CHAPTER XXXI

I SEEK INFORMATION

THE endorsement by the soldiers and sailors not only gave our campaign an added public interest and importance, but it was, as Dowd said it would be, a great incentive for the military organization and the men in it. It gave the men something more concrete to do than listening to speeches detailing benefits to be obtained, and expounding ideals. They had an object in view—the election of one of their number as mayor, and whatever consequent advantages to the organization that may accrue therefrom. Also, there were constant dispatches in the newspapers concerning the progress of the varied attempts at national organization for the men who were in the army and navy, and our fellows soon realized the better position they will hold when the nation-wide welding together is begun because of their own solidarity.

They went at the campaign with a whoop, holding meetings, making canvasses, getting their women folks interested, and, from time to time, dropping in on Mr. Perkins at his meetings, and heckling him good-naturedly. We heard little more of the opposition among the soldiers. Phelps tried to start something, but had little success. Most of the men who went to

the hall with him, on the night of the meeting, either lost interest or came with us. There was a certain small percentage of returned soldiers who refused to have anything to do with any plan to get together, but we had the bulk of the men, and as the new contingents arrived home from France and the camps we enlisted most of those, also.

Our women's section of the campaign committee, of which Miss Crawford, Miss Harrow and Mrs. Ainsley were the leaders and directors, was made up of twenty-five carefully selected women, picked by these three, from all walks of life. There was a considerable effort, by women who constantly espouse new movements for the publicity they can get, and accompanying pictures of themselves in the papers, and from society women who thought it would be interesting, to get on the committee, but Miss Harrow, Miss Crawford and Mrs. Ainsley were stonily deaf to their entreaties. They selected women who are genuinely interested, and formed an efficient and active section.

They took women who were successful in war-work organization, women who had shown intelligent interest when we were making our soldier organization, women who had been of consequence in former municipal reform movements, and several women who are now identified with labor in its women-workers aspects. I discovered that Mrs. Ainsley, for all her fondness for frocks and frills, is a most attractive and effective speaker, and that Miss Harrow is a wonder at organization.

My admiration for Miss Crawford, her serenity,

her efficiency, her intimate knowledge of politics, her sincerity, and her enormous capacity for sustained and enthusiastic endeavor increased daily, almost hourly. Her relations with me were most business-like and impersonal. I, apparently, occupied no other place in her thoughts than a candidate, representing a certain policy and principle, for whom she worked, not because of any particular interest in the candidate, but because of belief in the policy and principle. I made several essays at establishing a more personal relation, and had no success. I was but a cog in the machine to her.

However, I thought about her a good deal, a great deal, in fact, and was conscious of certain stirrings and confusions within me when I talked to her, which I did, nevertheless, whenever she would give me an opportunity. This was not often, for she was busy. One day I said to Steve Fox: "Steve, what is your idea of Miss Crawford?"

"She's one of the finest women I have ever known," Steve replied, so earnestly and promptly that it gave me a queer little twist, and caused me to look at him curiously and wonder what he meant by it.

"You don't have to tell me that," I protested. "I know it as well as you do. I mean is she—does she—darn it—you know what I mean."

"No, I don't know what you mean, either. You asked me what is my idea of Miss Crawford, and I tell you. Apparently, what I tell you is not what you are seeking. Come again, George. My motto is: I strive to please."

"Do you think she ever—that is, do you think she

has any idea—I mean, do you think she ever will get married?”

Steve laughed. “Oh ho,” he said. “That’s the way the wind is blowing, is it? Well, I’ll tell you, George, frankly, that I don’t know. She has never taken me into her confidence on the subject, and far be it from me to mention the matter to her. Perhaps she will; perhaps not, but she’s a woman, and a darned good-looking one, and the chances are she will fall for some man some day. They nearly all do. But why this concern on your part? You’re not thinking of yourself, are you?”

“I might be,” I said, and I felt my cheeks reddening.

Steve laughed again. “Good old George,” he said, “chap of insatiable ambition. First he wants to be mayor, and then he aspires to the hand of Miss Crawford, which is some aspiration, I’ll say. You surely are branching out, George. The Army did a lot for you.”

“Oh, Steve,” I urged, “be serious for a minute. What I want to know is do you think there would be any chance for me?”

“I don’t know,” he replied, “and I trust I am sufficiently serious when I say I have never noticed a blush mantling her damask cheek when you appear—not yet. It looks to me as if you stand with her about the same as the telephone—a useful means of communication with the public, but entirely devoid of sentimental reflexes.”

“Maybe I can change that.”

“Maybe you can. Who knows? Women are getting married right along, every day, notwithstanding

their new freedom. The good old marriage certificate in a tasty frame still continues to be the highest possible exemplification of a neat little wall decoration with the bulk of them. They are the equals of man, now, but you can bet, no matter how much they may prize their greater responsibilities and opportunities, they are not letting go of that handy little manner of putting man in his proper place and under their close, personal and individual management. I refer to marriage. She might look with favor on you. You never can tell."

Steve's cynical lack of sympathy with my budding romantic impulses annoyed me. "You might be more sympathetic," I said.

"Sympathetic," he laughed. "Why, I'm all sympathy. I'll hold your hand, and listen to your maunder. I'll write odes to her for you. I'll even go so far as to speak to her about you, call her attention to you, if you like, mention you as a possible matrimonial prospect, if she should be interested in such matters. Call on me for anything, George. I'm your friend. I'll go right and start something for you this minute."

"If you do I'll murder you!" I exclaimed.

"All right," said Steve, "if that is the way you look at it come on to that noon-day meeting and forget your amorous inclinations while making a speech on your transcendent qualities as a candidate."

We had meetings in the business section at noon each day, which were addressed by men selected by Mr. Mayfield and Dowd. I spoke at a number of these. I had two or three speeches that I used as

the bases for all my talking, and embroidered these foundations with new and apt oratory whenever the occasion demanded. I found that I can say a good deal in twenty minutes, and was much encouraged over the receptions I received.

The campaign whooped along, with plenty of noise and excitement. Dowd and Mayfield kept things moving everywhere. I took my assignments each morning, and made my speeches, participated in conferences and conscientiously did what Steve told me to, in order that the stream of publicity he fed into the newspapers might be unfailing. The newspapers were still treating me as an interloper. The *News* and the *Times* swung to Perkins, but gave me a fairly good show, but the *Globe* and the *Dispatch* were violently antagonistic. They kept calling for my proofs that Perkins participated in the city treasury scandal, and, as I did not produce them, said boldly the proofs do not exist. Perkins spoke as often as I did, and reiterated his denials each day. Dowd had his soldiers all over the city, working hard. We seemed to be stronger with the women than Perkins or Spearle, although there was a most imposing organization of women for Perkins, and Spearle had his contingent, also.

Dowd kept track of Pendergrast. Nothing was said of his arrival in the papers, nor of his stay at the hospital. They hushed that up. About a week after the fight Dowd reported: "He's all right physically again. His head is nearly healed outside, but it's all wrong inside. He's crazy as a loon. They are getting ready to take him to some private place where he can be treated. They think if they keep

the whiskey away from him for a time, and coax him along, he will come out of it all right, but he's in bad shape mentally now. He sat down there at that mine and cursed himself out of his mind. He has a lot of friends left, though, and they are looking out for him. Perkins went out to see him the other day."

"He did?" I said. "Then it's about time to spring that proof we have."

"Not yet," said Dowd, and, later, Mr. Mayfield concurred. They told me to continue the policy of reiteration of general charges, allowing Perkins to deny as much as he likes.

"Don't be impatient," they told me. "We want the full effect of it."

We ding-donged along until towards the end of the third week of the campaign, when Aldebert K. Hollister, general secretary of the associated commercial and business organizations of the city—the Board of Trade, the Chamber of Commerce, The Commercial Club, The Rotary Club, and all the rest—conceived the idea of holding a big noon-day meeting of all these bodies, before which the three candidates for mayor would appear, and make their claims for support. All these organizations work together, in various good-for-the-city enterprises, through a central body in which they are equally represented. Hollister organized that, when, as secretary of the Chamber of Commerce, he felt the need of a wider sphere for himself.

Hollister put his plan before the various campaign managers. All accepted the invitation for their candidates. The date for the meeting, which was to be preceded by a lunch, was fixed for the following Tues-

day, one week from the date of the primary. It was expanded to include representatives of the women's organizations also.

"Now, then," said Dowd, "this is the place to let go. I have seen Hunkins, and Spearle, and it is to be a sort of a triangular debate. Each of you is to talk for twenty or twenty-five minutes, and then each is to have a five-minute chance at rebuttal. Spearle will speak first, you second and Perkins last. In the five-minute rebuttal you will have the last crack. I insisted on that, and they consented."

"What sort of a speech shall I make?"

"Make the regular speech as the start. I told Hollister I wouldn't consent unless we have a free rein. Slam at Perkins, and he'll reply. Then, in your five-minute rebuttal, spring the sensation on them. State that we have the proof that Perkins was in with Pendergrast and tell what it is. Steve has facsimiles of the page of the minute book ready for the papers. Make it direct and without qualification. If they want a joint debate we'll give them one they will talk about for quite a spell."

At this time Dowd's canvasses showed that we were making headway, but that Perkins was not losing as many votes as we thought he would. There was a greater defection to us from Spearle than from Perkins. That was not a good sign, for what we wanted was to defeat Perkins, and thus bring the final contest between Spearle and myself, for we felt that Spearle would be the easiest man to beat in the election, notwithstanding his control of the city government.

"That Hunkins outfit is an air-tight concern," said Dowd. "It is the product of years of building, conserving, and disciplining, and we only have a month to overturn it in. Notwithstanding all the tom-toms we have beaten, and all the publicity we have had there are many people in this city—a great many—who haven't heard of us yet, or if they have heard of us think we are trying to sell something, or introduce a patent medicine or advertise a breakfast food. You may think that is fantastic, but it isn't. It is harder than you imagine to shake the people out of the ruts they are in, and one of the ruts the majority of our people are in is voting for the candidates Hunkins hands to them.

"Besides, he has a big grip on the business men of the city. Perkins is a big business man himself, you know, and Hunkins stands well with the older fellows. He has done them favors in his time. Our dependence is, chiefly, on the soldiers, the younger business men, the dissatisfied element, and the women. The women seem to like us fairly well, although Hunkins's women are getting good results. This thing is no walk-over. Don't delude yourself as to that. Mayfield and I stuff the papers with claims that we shall win in a walk, but if we squeeze through we'll be doing very well. It's no cinch."

"It will be after I spring that Perkins stuff," I said.

"I hope so," Dowd replied, "but let's not be too sure of it."

Meantime, I fancied I discerned a slightly-increased degree of attention in myself, personally, shown by Miss Crawford. Her interest in the campaign was

displayed constantly by her work, and her efforts to help win, but I thought that, as these busy days went on, she showed a trifle more of recognition of me as a man and not merely a candidate than she had shown. I pressed these little advantages, whenever occasion offered, and sought to pay her such attentions as I could to increase her partiality. We had several long talks, and she displayed friendly interest in my course, if elected, and discussed my affairs, present and prospective, as if they were matters of some concern to her. That was a straw, but I grasped it.

"Anything doing in the Romeo line?" Steve asked me on the morning of the luncheon by the commercial associations.

"Steve," I warned him, "lay off that, or I'll punch you in the eye."

"Serious as that, is it? If that is the case better let me write you a triolet or two. I'm great at triolets, and have a wonderful flair for the rondel and the rondeau. And, say, I'm a bear at lyrics. Listen:

"When sunset glows into golden glows
And the breath of the night is new——"

"Stop it," I cried, "or I'll lam you one. Besides, you faker, you didn't write that."

Steve shouted with laughter. "Oh, boy," he exclaimed, "the candidate has been reading poetry. Come to think of it, though, poetry may not work with these new women like it used to with the old ones. Perhaps you'd better quote her a slug or two of one of your well-known speeches, or ask Dowd for some pointers."

"Whatever I do I'll do myself," I growled.

"Excellent idea," said Steve. "I really do not think, when all's said and done, that the organization should take a hand in affairs of this sort."

CHAPTER XXXII

THE ACCUSING MINUTES

THERE was such a demand for seats for the business-men's meeting and luncheon that Hollister arranged to use the Armory, and when Steve, Dowd, Mayfield and myself arrived, at half past twelve, there were twelve or fifteen hundred men and women there. The luncheon, which was a fifty-cent concoction by one of our local caterers, neither occupied nor entertained us long, and at a quarter past one, Hollister, after preening himself considerably over the success of his enterprise, introduced Spearle.

Spearle is a talker who knows, and uses every political catch-word and phrase that gained currency in the past fifty years. He rang these all in, defended himself by saying that he prosecuted Miller vigorously, and that he, himself, deposed Pendergrast; detailed the achievements of his administration, and asked for further support. He constantly referred to me as "my young friend" as if being his young friend was some sort of an affliction, like a club foot or a goiter.

Then Hollister introduced me. We had a full third of our friends there, and Dowd and Steve led the cheering, which was enthusiastic and noisy. I dismissed what Spearle had said briefly, calling attention to the

fact that palliate it as he might, the city treasury scandal did occur during his term of office, and then went on to Perkins. I discussed Perkins with candor. I told of his connections with shady money-making schemes in which he used the city officials to further his own ends, instanced them, and wound up with a direct statement that he was not only a participant, but a beneficiary in the money taken from the city treasury, and challenged him to deny it when he spoke, not in the general terms of his usual denial, but in the specific terms that I made the charge: That he was of the gang, that he got some of the money; that he was a stockholder in the mining company; that he knew all about the plan, and aided and abetted it. I closed with my promises, if nominated and elected, to conduct the affairs of the city on a non-partisan, business basis, demolish the bosses and their machines, and give the people a clean, decent, honest and economical administration. They cheered me for two minutes or so after I finished.

Then it was Perkins's turn. I had never heard him speak, and watched him closely. He was a little excited, as he rose, but he had a chance to get himself in hand, for his partisans cheered him fully as long as mine had me. While the cheering for Perkins was going on I saw Hunkins. He sat in the middle of the room, and was waving his napkin at Perkins and inciting those around him to continued noise. It was the first time I had seen Hunkins since I broke with him, and I thought he looked fit and confident, somewhat to my dismay.

Presently, Perkins started. He wasted no time on

promises, professions or policies. He took a long running jump and landed directly on me. He denied every charge I made, called me a criminally-misled boy for making them, spoke with much contempt of my managers, and with sorrow and grief of my misguided friends and associates who were behind me. He told of his own long life of rectitude and public-spirited work in the city, wept a little over his great, profit-sharing emporium which he built from the ground up, starting as a poor boy. He declared himself innocent of any collusion, at any time, with Pendergrast, or any knowledge of this affair, and devoted his last ten minutes to deprecating me as a disturber, a faker, an egoist, a youth seeking notoriety at the expense of leading and honest, older and more experienced men, and closed by throwing up his hands and imploring High Heaven to smite him as he stood if what he said about his innocence was not true. He was not smitten, and he sat down amid great cheering.

Spearle rather deftly drew a comparison between Perkins and myself to his own advantage, in his final five minutes. Perkins wept and protested again, and then it was my turn.

I rose, held up the book containing the accusing minutes, and said, with such declamatory effect as I could muster, "I have here a book recording the minutes of the annual meetings of the private mining company that was capitalized and exploited by the money that belonged to you and all other tax-payers in this city. I read from the minutes recorded on page twenty-seven in this book: 'Annual meeting of the Progress Mining Company, April 17, 1916. Present: Thomas

Pendergrast, president; James K. Skidmore, secretary, and the following directors: Messrs. Larrimore, Doniphan, Masters, Wallace, and——' ”

I stopped and looked at Perkins who was staring at me. His mouth was open, his eyes were twitching at the corners, he picked nervously at the table-cloth with the fingers of his right hand.

“And Perkins!” I shouted. Then I stopped again.

Instantly Tommie Dowd and Steve Fox and others of our fellows jumped up and raised a yell of triumph. Perkins half-collapsed in his seat. I was trembling somewhat, but retained sense of the dramatic enough to turn and point an accusing finger at Perkins and hold up the book again. They told me, afterwards, I was quite a Nemesis figure.

The room was in an uproar. I felt triumphant. Then, as I looked out over the gesticulating, shouting, excited crowd I saw Hunkins, the only calm man in the room, standing on a chair trying to get the attention of the presiding Hollister.

“Mr. Chairman,” he shouted, at regular intervals. “Mr. Chairman—Mr. Chairman!”

After a time Hollister banged the gathering into some semblance of quiet.

“Mr. Hunkins,” he said.

“But, Mr. Chairman,” I protested, “I have not yet consumed my time.”

Hunkins bowed. “After the gentleman has finished,” he said, “I desire to ask him a question or two.”

“I shall be glad to answer them,” I said, and I tore into a denunciation of Hunkins, Perkins and Spearle, claiming that the proof absolute was there that Perkins

was in the mining deal as he, undoubtedly, was in the street-car deal, and the telephone deal, and the electric light deal, and demanded of those present if they are so far lost to a sense of decency, honesty and civic pride as to give these men further control of their municipal affairs.

"No! No!" they shouted, or many of them did. I thought there was a greater response than there had been in the preliminary cheers for me. Tommie Dowd raised his clasped hands at me, and shook them. He was jubilant.

"Now, Mr. Chairman," said Hunkins, after it was quiet again, "I desire to ask Captain Talbot if he is certain of the authenticity of those minutes? It would be an easy matter to prepare such a record—I'll use the softer word prepare rather than the harsher one forge."

"The gentleman uses terms to designate practices with which he is far more familiar than I am," I replied. "I will state that the book is here open to the inspection of every person in this room. It bears its own evidence of its authenticity."

"Very well," continued Hunkins, calmly. "I now ask if the name of Mr. Perkins occurs as Ezra T. Perkins, or simply as Perkins without the given name and initial?"

"The names of the directors have no initials attached," I said.

"In that case," said Hunkins, "I feel quite sure that Captain Talbot and his friends have jumped at a wrong and libelous conclusion. I know Mr. Perkins was not

concerned in that affair. It undoubtedly is another Perkins."

Perkins sat limply in his chair during this colloquy. He rose to it immediately, as a chance for an alibi.

"That's it—that's it," he gibbered. "It wasn't me—another Perkins—that's the explanation—not me at all—some other man named Perkins."

"Mr. Chairman," shouted Dowd, "this eleventh-hour attempt to prove an alibi for Ezra T. Perkins will not wash. It is too flimsy, too palpable, too absurd. One look at Perkins, himself, when this proof was produced showed that the accusation is true. He was in that deal. He was a director in that company—is now for that matter, and no protests, no quibbles or no alibi-ing by Hunkins or any one else can change that fact nor save Perkins from the defeat that is coming to him a week from to-day and the defeat he so richly deserves."

"I'll produce the proof," asserted Hunkins, with a calm assurance that carried weight.

"You can't do it," asserted Dowd; and then there was much more noise, during which Perkins, partially restored to equanimity again, shrilly protested it wasn't him, and Hollister, not desiring to have his meeting end in a row, adjourned hurriedly.

The afternoon papers carried great displays on the story. Talbot men scoffed at the claim that the man at the meeting was not Perkins, the candidate, and Perkins men were sure it was some other Perkins—"a common name," they said. "Plenty of Perkinses in the city."

"They'll try to put over a good-enough Perkins until after election," said Dowd, "but it won't work."

That is what they did do. The morning papers had statements from Skidmore, Masters, Doniphan and Wallace that the Perkins of the minutes was a certain Homer K. Perkins, who went to Mexico in the fall of 1916, and was still there; and not Ezra T. Perkins.

That was thin stuff, but it worked fairly well, from their viewpoint. Perkins grabbed it, and protested his innocence, and the newspapers, while not accepting it entirely, gave the denials great prominence. We worked unceasingly to establish our contention. Dowd had big posters made showing the page of the minute book, with Perkins's name printed in red, and appropriate and terse sentences calling attention to the picture supplied by Steve. We put out many additional speakers, who reiterated the charge, and set as many soldiers as we could to the work of spreading it by handbill, and by smaller posters. I made six or seven speeches a day. Mr. Mayfield put his whole campaign committee, women and all, on trucks, at street corners, in halls, and wherever there was anything that would serve for a stump. Hunkins had many men and women out, also; and Spearle. We had church meetings on Sunday, and I occupied a pulpit at St. Mark's Episcopal church myself at the invitation of the vestrymen.

On Monday morning, as I left the house, Dad said: "George, I'll be waiting for you when you get home to-night. I shall want to talk to you."

"All right, Dad," I said, "but I may be late."

"I'll be waiting. Come as soon as you can."

The last day was calmer. We checked up our canvasses. The results looked fair, only. Much to my

disappointment, there was no overwhelming victory in sight. Mayfield thought we would pull through, but Dowd and Miss Crawford were not so sure.

"Hunkins is a hard man to beat," said Dowd. "That organization of his is copper-riveted and air-tight. He knows this game from top to bottom. There's no use jollyng ourselves. The situation is this: We shall poll all the soldiers, practically, and a good many women. I figure that there will be about 60,000 votes cast. Spearle will get about 20,000 of those. That will leave 40,000 to split between Talbot and Perkins. Our job is to get 21,000 votes, and I don't know whether we shall or not. Our figures do not show it to-night, but there is this consolation. Our canvassers were inexperienced, not experts like those Hunkins has. I hear from inside sources that Hunkins gives us, at the maximum, 18,000 votes. I think we'll get more than that, and it may be a landslide. Also, it may not. If we had two months to educate them it would be a cinch. Good-night. I'm going to get some sleep, for we must have our watchers at the polls early, and I have that detail in charge."

I was discouraged as I started for home, but cheered up considerably when Miss Crawford said to me: "Don't be down-hearted, Captain Talbot. It isn't hopeless, by any means. I think we have a good chance. Anyhow, the fight has been worth while, hasn't it?"

I thought about that all the way home, making a personal application for the last part of her remark. "Worth while." Maybe that means worth while be-

cause she met me. Thus elevated and encouraged, I let myself in our front door.

"That you, George?" Dad called as I stepped into the hall.

"Yes, Dad."

"Come into the library, won't you?"

I went to the library, and as I entered the room William Hunkins rose from a chair and came forward to greet me!

CHAPTER XXXIII

HUNKINS TALKS AGAIN

WHAT the devil——" jerked out of me as I stopped, just inside the door.

"Am I doing here?" finished Hunkins, with that little laugh of his.

Dad was laughing, also. "Come on in, George," he said, "and sit down. Don't pull a gun. This is a perfectly pleasant little party."

"But," I said, staring at Hunkins to make sure I was seeing straight, "I don't——"

"Of course you don't," broke in Dad, "but come in, and sit down, and we'll explain."

I took a few steps, stopped, and stared hard at the two men. Both were in high spirits. Hunkins held out his hand. "Good evening, Captain," he said. "Don't be hostile. I'm a friendly Indian."

I shook hands with him limply, and stood there, first looking at Dad and then at Hunkins. It was beyond me. Several different explanations came to my mind in quick succession—perhaps this—perhaps that—none satisfactory. I sat down, looked at the laughing men again and said: "I can't make it out. What's the plot?"

"The plot is all developed," Dad replied. "We're

at the end of the fourth act now, where we all are preparing to live happily ever afterwards."

"Dad," I said, "quit beating about the bush, and explain this to me."

"Mr. Hunkins will explain it," Dad said, settling himself in a chair and lighting a cigar. "Go ahead, Billy!"

I started at that; Dad calling Hunkins "Billy" and, apparently on the most intimate terms with him! "Something wrong here," I thought. "I don't like the looks of it."

"I'll be glad to hear any explanation Mr. Hunkins may offer," I said, turning to Hunkins. "It needs quite a lot of clearing up, in my opinion."

Hunkins laughed again. "To begin with," he said, "you will be nominated in the primary to-morrow."

"Not by any help of yours," I replied, sourly.

"Passing that for the moment," he answered amiably, "the fact remains that you will be nominated for mayor in the primary to-morrow."

Then it crushed down on me. I have better prospects than Dowd and Mayfield think. I shall win. Hunkins, because of his better machinery for canvassing, knows it. He is here to make a deal with me. And Dad is a party to it. The shock of it brought me to my feet with a passionate protest.

"Wait a minute!" I shouted. "I'll not make any deal! If I win I win independently, just as I have made my fight. I'll not——"

"Sit down, George," soothed Dad. "Give Billy a chance to talk to you. You're seeing things. Nobody

will ask you to make a deal, certainly not we two. Please sit down."

I dropped back into my chair. "Dad never lied to me," I thought. "He wouldn't begin now. Besides, the apparent understanding between the two can't be to my detriment. Dad wouldn't allow that."

"Go ahead," I said. "I'll listen, but I warn you in advance that nothing said here will bind me in any way."

"That's understood," said Hunkins. "We don't want to bind you. We want to free you. Now, then, to revert to my original statement: You will be nominated in the primary to-morrow. I shall make that certain."

"You?" I shouted, jumping up again. "What have you got to do with it?"

"Everything," Hunkins continued, calmly. "If I rescind the orders I have already given you will be beaten. But I'll explain all that later. If you will allow me, I shall tell you a story that may interest you, and will be corroborated by your father."

I looked inquiringly at Dad. He nodded his head.

"Twenty years ago," Hunkins continued, "when I took over the leadership of the organization, after the death of Andrew Bruce, I knew your father, not so well as I know him now, but fairly well. He was interested in politics to the extent that he wanted to secure a better city government, a non-partisan, business administration of the city's affairs, and he had been active in the attempt. His activities interfered with the plans of Bruce, and he was beaten every time he essayed anything. The real reason he was beaten

was not because Bruce's organization beat him, but because the men who should have supported him either were indifferent, or were securing benefits from conditions as they then existed—the business men, I mean, and the professional men, and all those who might have fought with your father. Instead, they looked on him as a fanatic, or as a fool. They were engrossed in their business. They were engaged in making money to the exclusion of all other considerations, and they considered politics a rotten game, and let it go at that. They were keen about their own businesses, but so lax and indifferent and uninterested in the business of the city, which should have been their chief concern, they allowed the boss system to perpetuate itself, and went on careless to the fact that the affairs of the city were in the hands of men who were politicians, and who used the city's machinery for political purposes and their own purposes first, and paid small attention to the real needs, rights, and wants of the taxpayers, and citizens.

“John Talbot fought to interest the men, to arouse them to their opportunity, and he failed. Politics was beneath these citizens—a dirty business, fit only for muckers and corrupt machines. They could not be made to see that the character of the government of a city, or a state, or a nation is the direct and highest charge of the men who live in that city, that state or that nation, under our system of democracy; nor that the lack of character of that government is their sole and inevitable fault. They denounced boss rule, and took no steps to destroy it. They hadn't time. They must make money. They had their trifling social du-

ties, their piffling amusements, their ambitions to outshine their neighbors to occupy them. The criterion of success was money, and the demonstration of that success was ostentation in spending it. They couldn't bother with politics.

"I came into the leadership of the organization I still lead. As I say, I knew your father. What he wanted for this city was not only better government, but greater beauty and utility. He wanted park extensions, finer schools, bigger and more modern hospitals, new public buildings, an expanded and efficient system of public service utilities—surface lines, light, power, communication, and so on. He wanted to make this city a beautiful and comfortable place to live in as well as of the greatest utilitarian development, and he came to me.

"I was a young man, and I had had a rigorous machine training under Bruce, but in my way I wanted the same things for this city your father wanted. I had the same ideas, and the same ideals, but I knew, what he was beginning to know, that the only way these improvements in our city could be obtained was through a political conformance to conditions as they existed. The men who should do the fighting and the work would not take the time, nor engage in the struggle.

"They were asked, time and again, to join in. Men with vision, like your father, endeavored to convince them that the city's business is their business, but it was useless. If they took an interest it was but momentary—sporadic—on some especial occasion, or when there was some particular excitement. They shouted a little just before elections, but the politi-

cians work at all seasons. Hence, what was to be done must be done with the instruments at hand, and those instruments were the politicians and their machines.

"We figured it out on a purely practical basis. In brief, it resolved itself to this: We decided to play the game with the cards that were dealt to us, instead of demanding a new deal. Your father had tried to get new cards, but he had failed. I was in a position to play, with such skill as might be, the cards that fell to me, and I have played them always with the end of helping the city in view.

"It has been a thankless, and a disagreeable game. I would have thrown down my hand many times if your father had not stood by, always, urging me to continue, and showing me results that might be obtained. We have operated, always, on the theory, whether right or wrong, ethically, that the ends justify the means, and what we have accomplished speaks for itself. We have finer schools, better hospitals, greater public buildings, a more useful set of public utilities than any city of our size in the country; greater parks, and more comforts for the people. To bring this about I have consorted with these men you have had some experience of when I much preferred to be at my books. I have used them, and been used by them. I have endured abuse and condemnation. I have been unscrupulous, at times, and have resorted to many political devices that the men who stand aloof because politics is a dirty game would be quick to condemn as proving their contention; but all the time there has been a complete understanding between your father

and myself, and a complete unity of action. We have been beaten often, but secured results.

"It has been necessary, at times, to condone things that should not have been condoned, either on ethical, or some other, grounds; but we have played the game that way because, from the indifference of those who should have helped us, we could not play it any other way. We used the tools we had, according to the nature of the tools.

"I have often thought of that statue of Alexander R. Shepherd that stands in front of the District Building in the city of Washington. They drove Shepherd from the city, forty years or so ago, and exiled him to Mexico because he was a political boss, and had plans for the improvement of the city the near-sighted citizens of those days could not comprehend; and because they could not comprehend them, said were dishonest—the unfailing state of mind of the average persons. Any man who rates higher than their conventional conceptions they condemn as crazy. Any plan that transcends their limited understanding is dishonest. After thirty years they put up a statue to Shepherd.

"Now, then, it is so, or ought to be, in many other cities. The people condemn the bosses, and rightly so, too, in many cases, for I am not trying to excuse nor palliate the rottenness of politics; but when all is said and done, after the bosses have passed, the improvements remain. The streets that make the city better are paved; the schools and the public buildings and the parks, all are there, permanently beautifying, and making the place better to live in, no matter how ob-

tained; and they were obtained in the only way possible because of the attitude of the bulk of the beneficiaries, the citizens themselves, who might have improved their cities, but left the job to others—always politicians. We knew that, and that is what we have had in view in this game we have played here.

"Also, we have had in mind a better system, for I loathe the conditions which forced us to this extremity, and so does he, and we saw an opportunity when we considered the upheaval brought about by the war. Your father came to me when you told him your intention to go into politics and said that was our chance. He would have come if it had been any other man of your type, for he is as unselfish as he is patriotic, but, to his great gratification, and mine, you offered yourself, with your plan to organize the returned soldiers into an instrument for bettering not only their own conditions, for putting into home operation the ideals for which they fought, but for welding them into an organization that might work to the permanent advantage of all our people.

"He was not certain you were in earnest, that you would stick, for he knew of the discouragements, the lack of coöperation, the innumerable difficulties you would have, and both he and I deliberately put you to some tests. If you will remember, your father's reception of your idea, and his further comments were not enthusiastic. He was trying you out."

I looked over at Dad again as he said this, and Dad concurred with a: "That's true."

"We finally decided," Hunkins continued, "that you were in earnest, and not merely looking for an occupa-

tion, or a sensation, and then we made our plans. I could not take you permanently into my organization, for that would brand you at once with the machine brand, and tie you to machine methods and processes. Therefore, we decided to force you into an independent stand, to make you fight the machine, to compel you to take a position that would leave you free to act, later, unhampered, unpledged, beholden to nobody but those you brought to your support on that basis. Nothing could be attained if you were a machine candidate. We wanted you to start clean.

"To that end, I put you in the board of aldermen and gave you that chance to expose the city-treasury scandal. That was for the purpose of making you known to the people—pure advertisement—and fitting you for our further plans. Then we told you enough about Perkins to make it impossible for you to support Perkins, and I deliberately nominated Perkins, hoping you would take the stand you did. If you had acquiesced in the nomination of Perkins our plan would have fallen through, and we should have been compelled to wait still longer. But you didn't. When you said you would run yourself, feeling certain that Perkins is what he is, a crook and a grafter and a hypocritical, contemptible man, that independent determination gave us our opportunity and our job was to keep you up to that declaration.

"I goaded you with that interview of mine, and I set every obstacle in your way that would hold you to your determination. I nominated Perkins with no idea of electing him, and made a vigorous campaign for him. I did not dare relax any in my efforts for

him for what we desired was the establishment of you before the people as independent of any machine, and opposed to both. Outwardly, we have fought you viciously. We can beat you. You have made a good fight, but the power of the organization is too great for you. You are too new at it. Your soldiers are not in great enough number. The ramifications of the machine, and the natural and criminal indifference of the men who should be for you operate against you.

"Also, you haven't had time. The people of this city are so accustomed to having their candidates picked for them, have submitted to that humiliation for so long, that they never think of picking candidates themselves. In fact, I think most of them do not realize they have that power. We politicians live because of that indifference. There never has been a minute since we began voting in this city when the people could not destroy any boss, but they haven't. Notwithstanding the virtue of your case, you couldn't uproot that in four weeks, and especially with an outwardly respectable candidate like Perkins against you. The people do not think, often. Thought means new sort of effort. They are creatures of habit, and their habit is to have their candidates picked for them. That is why Perkins will get a lot of votes to-morrow. He's regular, and so are most of the voters. With another month to rouse them in you might have won yourself.

"But you will be nominated, because my men, in certain wards, will throw you enough votes to make your selection sure. It will not be a landslide, but just enough. My canvass shows, accurately, how many votes will be needed, and they will be supplied. That

will leave the organization intact for election purposes in November, but it, also, will place you in a position where you can take hold, administer the city independently, and without obligation to the organization, because I shall not demand any, and the men who will do the work in the wards will not know, until after it is all done in November, that there is to be this outcome.

"You will start clean. There isn't a string on you. John Talbot and I have been working for twenty years for this end, and circumstances have played into your hands with you, his son. As soon as I can I intend to quit. I am tired and through. Some one may try to take my place, but you, with your position and independence, can soon break down that opposition. You must make an organization of your own, and an organization in full harmony with the present conditions.

"We hope, your father and I, that these new conditions will awake the people to their immediate civic responsibilities, interest them in their own politics, and cause them to take active part in their own public business to the extent, at least, of seeing that it is non-partisan and efficient in its purely municipal relations. Perhaps you can. We couldn't, although we tried hard enough in our time. At any rate, you have the opportunity. I congratulate you in advance as the next mayor of this city and wish you all the success there is.

"I shall support you, of course, but you must conspicuously maintain your own organization, keep Dowd and Mayfield as your managers, and have no apparent dealings with us, for that would smirch the independence of attitude your victory will give to you. No-

body need know what I have told you but ourselves. The men who have my orders in the wards will be close-mouthed. I know them well enough to know that. So you are absolutely unhandicapped."

He stopped. I was in a sort of a daze, understanding what he said, but having some difficulty in making the personal application. His intimation of secrecy stuck in my mind.

"Just a minute," I interrupted. "This is a sort of an overwhelming thing, and I accept, of course, but I must tell it all to Tommie Dowd and Steve Fox. They have been with me all through, and I shall not conceal anything from them."

"By all means," Hunkins replied. "I'd tell Mr. Mayfield, too. What I mean is that you are a politician now, of a high grade, I trust, and should be politic. The reasons for holding it among ourselves must be obvious to you. But that is detail. Now you have heard the story and I wish you well. I am going to California, for a long stay, 'taking refuge in my virtue and my honest, undowered poverty' as my favorite philosopher, Horace, puts it; although I fancy neither my virtue nor my poverty will be conceded by some sections of this community for a long time to come."

"Mr. Hunkins," I said, "I am so much in whirl over this that I can't say anything to you but thank you." Then I turned to Dad and held out my hands: "Dad," I cried, "is this what it all means?"

"Yes, George," Dad said, coming and taking my hand in his, "this is what it all means. We see an opportunity to do a great thing for the people if they

will help ever so little, an opportunity for these boys who bore arms to help themselves to get some of the rewards they deserve, and that opportunity is in your hands. Will you use it?"

"Dad," I replied, and my eyes were wet, and my voice husky, "I'll do the best I can."

I was near to tears as I stood there, and then the humor of it struck me. "You two ought to be actors," I said. "You are wasting great histrionic talents in city politics."

"We are actors," Dad replied. "We have been doing a brother act for nearly twenty years, but you are the first person we ever let in to see the show."

CHAPTER XXXIV

TWO WINNERS

HUNKINS kept his word. It looked dubious and disheartening early on primary night, for the first returns in showed that Perkins and I were running about evenly, with a slight advantage to Perkins here and there.

"I guess it's all over," said Dowd, gloomily. "We're only holding even in these inside wards, and those outside wards always go for Hunkins."

"Cheer up," I told him. "Maybe they will go for us this time."

"Not much chance," he replied. "The machine is strong out there."

But, as the later returns came in I began to gain, and by ten o'clock I was two hundred ahead. Mayfield claimed victory, and the completed tabulation showed that I won over Perkins by 482 votes. The total vote was 60,612, and of these I had 20,472, Perkins had 19,990 and Spearle 20,150.

"Not many," exulted Steve, "but as good as a million! I wonder what line from Horace Brother Hunkins pulled when he got that news. Oh, you little four hundred and eighty-two votes! I'll bet Hunkins is so sore he's biting a file. I'd hate to be those ward leaders when he gets them on the carpet."

"I don't know about that," I said.

"Oh," jeered Steve, "you don't know! Well, I do. He's a hard loser, that Hunkins person is."

Just then a clerk came in to tell me to come to the telephone on an urgent call. When I returned I asked Steve: "Who do you think that was?"

"Somebody asking for a job?"

"No; it was Hunkins, offering his congratulations."

Steve whistled, and Dowd looked incredulous. Then I took the two of them and Mr. Mayfield into an inside room, and told them the story. They listened without comment until I had finished.

Then Dowd said: "Well, I'm glad it happened, although I wish we could have put it over ourselves. However, the time was too short, and we didn't have the votes; but I'll tell you one thing and that is this: In another month it would be different. We'd have a lot more soldiers, and were gaining with the general public every day."

"In my opinion," said Mr. Mayfield, "it is an excellent result. We win, and we have shown enough strength to force the organization to stand behind us to make it sure in November. Those fellows will go to bat on election day thinking their support then will hold things as they are. We'll welcome their votes, and make no promises, and if we win then we'll be free-handed."

"It's all right, Tommie," I said, "if it hadn't been for you and Steve and the work you did at the start I'd had no votes at all; and I'll never forget it."

Mr. Mayfield discreetly withdrew, and Tommie, and Steve and I held a little jubilation of our own,

where I had a chance to tell them just how much their friendship, loyalty and support meant and will always mean to me.

There wasn't much excitement in the campaign that followed. Mr. Mayfield announced that our organization would continue, and work independently for my election. Perkins talked some about a recount, but that came to nothing for Hunkins sent a cordial statement to the papers, acknowledging defeat, and assuring us of the organization support, but not attempting, in any way, to interfere in our plans nor campaign. His men kept on the job at his direction, and his coöperation was effective but in no way compromising to my independent status.

I made many speeches, Mayfield, Dowd, and Miss Crawford worked continuously, and Steve Fox, who had gone back to his newspaper desk, filled the *News* with Talbot articles, because, now that Perkins was beaten, the *News* supported me enthusiastically. I omitted the Perkins condemnation from my speeches, and went after Spearle. The *Globe* and the *Dispatch* were frantically for Spearle, and assailed me bitterly, but that didn't bother me. I was used to newspaper attacks by that time.

I saw Miss Crawford, at the headquarters, every day, and angled assiduously for some evidence of more than a casual interest in me. She was cordial, always, and sometimes more than that, I thought, but I couldn't prove to myself anything but friendliness, often as I analyzed every look and every remark after I had talked to her.

On election night Dad arranged to have the returns

sent to the house, and gave a party. All our campaign committee came, and some of his friends. The good news began to come soon after the polls closed and by nine o'clock my election by a big majority was assured.

It was a joyous and jubilant gathering. Dad was so tickled he became almost inarticulate. People crowded around me and congratulated me, calling me "Mr. Mayor" and otherwise pleasantly disporting themselves. After many trials and various excuses, I managed to attract Miss Crawford to the library which was unoccupied because the refreshments were in another place. I had worked up enough courage to put my hopes into something more than secret language. She was very happy over the victory, and, it seemed to me, more attractive than she ever had been.

I had planned a most effective, as I thought, plea to make to her, which was mostly about needing her to help me continue the work now so well begun. I tried to say it, but couldn't. Instead, I stammered, stumbled and finally managed to emit a banal: "I have something to say to you."

"I know it," she said, "and I wish you wouldn't." She smiled kindly, but not at all affectionately, at me.

"Why not?" I asked, hurt and surprised. "I am going—that is, I want to——"

"Don't do it," she said, earnestly. "What you intend to ask me is to be the wife of the future mayor, isn't it?"

"Yes, but how do you know?"

"Women have ways of knowing those things, even political women," she laughed; "but forgive me. I do

not mean to joke about it. I am sorry, very sorry, but what you seek is impossible."

That staggered me. "Why is it impossible?" I asked her with all the joy of my election gone out of me.

"Because," she said, smiling radiantly, "I am going to be the wife of the future Senator from this state."

"Who?" I gasped.

"Tommie Dowd."

That was a facer. I never even suspected it. I rallied as well as I could, and took her by both her hands. "I am glad," I told her, and I meant it, too, "so long as it can't be me that it will be Tommie Dowd."

"I know you are," she said.

Just then I heard Steve Fox calling: "George, where are you? Come here."

"Come here, you," I answered, and Steve came in.

"Where's Tommie?" I asked him.

"Outside somewhere."

"Bring him in here."

Steve was back in a moment with Dowd.

"Tommie," I said, "I congratulate you. You are the biggest winner in this—the luckiest man of the lot."

"How so?" he asked.

"You have elected your man mayor, you have organized your soldiers, and you are going to marry Miss Crawford."

Dowd blushed like a girl. "Who told you?" he asked.

"Miss Crawford did," I said, "so I think it's authentic."

"But," stammered Dowd, "we didn't——"

"Hurrray!" interrupted Steve. "No matter what you did or didn't. You are—that's the point. And," turning to me, "I never guessed it and it's been going on right under our eyes all this time."

"You have nothing on me, Steve," I admitted, ruefully, "I never guessed it, either."

"That being the case," said Steve, "the place for two such poor guessers is outside. Come on, you're needed there, and you are not needed here."

As he led me out, I heard a band blaring, and the tramp of many feet.

"What is it?" I asked.

"Your constituents are arriving to remind you of those jobs you promised them."

"Speech! Speech!" cried the crowd.

Steve pushed me out on the porch, and Dad's guests crowded behind me. I made my speech to an enthusiastic and admiring audience. There were two persons who might have listened but who did not. I refer to Miss Esther Crawford and Thomas James Dowd.

THE END



